

*It's All
About Culture:*

BETTER

Businesses

by

Design

A Playbook for Building a
Design-Led Culture

Brought to you by the DesignSingapore Council
and ROHEI Learning & Consulting

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Executive Summary

For design to take root and flourish throughout an organisation's workflow, the seeds of design need to be planted at the cultural level.



For generations after Leonardo Da Vinci's death, scientists and historians would pore over Da Vinci's work and uncover prototypes, conceptual drawings and plans that were centuries ahead of his time. With designs for helicopters, hydraulic bridges and automatic weapons, Da Vinci's notebooks seem to have predicted the world's technological future. Having created such prescient plans, prototypes and concepts, Da Vinci is commonly recognised as one of history's leading design thinkers.

Over five centuries after Da Vinci's death, businesses today are realising that design thinking is a crucial aspect of corporate competitiveness and longevity. Design thinking is the approach of thinking like a designer and solving problems creatively. It is also a human-centred approach to innovation, encompassing user centricity, iteration and experimentation in order to create innovative and relevant solutions. Nurturing design thinking in an organisation requires a change in mindsets, a shift in perspectives and a need to embrace a new set of values. In order to change a modern factory floor or boardroom into a cosmic womb of design, akin to one of Da Vinci's workshops where many of his ideas and innovations were birthed, organisations need design culture.

Culture has a significant impact on how an organisation operates, and it must be built with careful intention. Organisations with a culture focused solely on immediate results tend to suffer in the areas of experimentation, research and development. When a company

does not tolerate failure, its staff will rarely try to come up with new ideas. If leaders do not encourage flat and open communication, teams will not collaborate. So for design to take root and flourish throughout an organisation's workflow, the seeds of design need to be planted at the cultural level.

This playbook presents 22 principles that can help your organisation to build a design-led culture. They are categorised into six groups:

1. Visionary Leadership
2. Inspirational Leadership
3. Relational Leadership
4. Design as Identity
5. Adoption of Design
6. Innovation by Design

The 22 principles are presented along with examples from leading organisations that have successfully implemented design, and recommended actions that can be taken immediately. Case studies are also included to provide more context for the principles.

This playbook also includes a link to a Design-Led Culture Survey, which acts as a quick litmus test on how you perceive your organisation's culture across the six categories. This can be used as a starting point to identify which principles might require more focus than others.

Introduction

Culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is *the* game. In the end, an organisation is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value.

Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.
Former Chief Executive Officer of IBM

developing it. The DesignSingapore Council (Dsg) and ROHEI Learning & Consulting held 47 interviews with senior management personnel from 27 design-led organisations. With a list of companies including family-run Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), international conglomerates, public hospitals and government agencies, the strategies detailed in this book aim to be applicable to any organisation, regardless of industry or size.

Culture is the bedrock of an organisation. Various studies have shown that an organisation's culture has a direct impact on the work it does. Organisational culture determines how individuals go about their daily work, and can dictate how an organisation performs in relation to its strategy. Yet culture can take many forms, differing according to the goals of the organisation. For design-led organisations, design is embedded so deeply that it becomes more than just part of their processes and strategy, but a part of their culture.

Companies that are aiming to be design-led cannot simply focus on building design knowledge and skills. These companies must also nurture a culture of design to ensure sustainable, long-term transformation. By neglecting design culture, companies run the risk of only scratching the surface of design without truly benefitting from its presence within the organisation.

This playbook examines the culture of design-led organisations and uncovers the strategies involved in

What is design?

The concept of design thinking has been gaining prominence in recent years, but its origins can be traced back to the 1950s, when design thinking was first mentioned as a tool to develop more innovative solutions in engineering. While the core concept of design thinking has not changed since its inception, the scope has had to widen significantly to keep up with changes in modern technology and engineering – and the new breed of users they have produced.

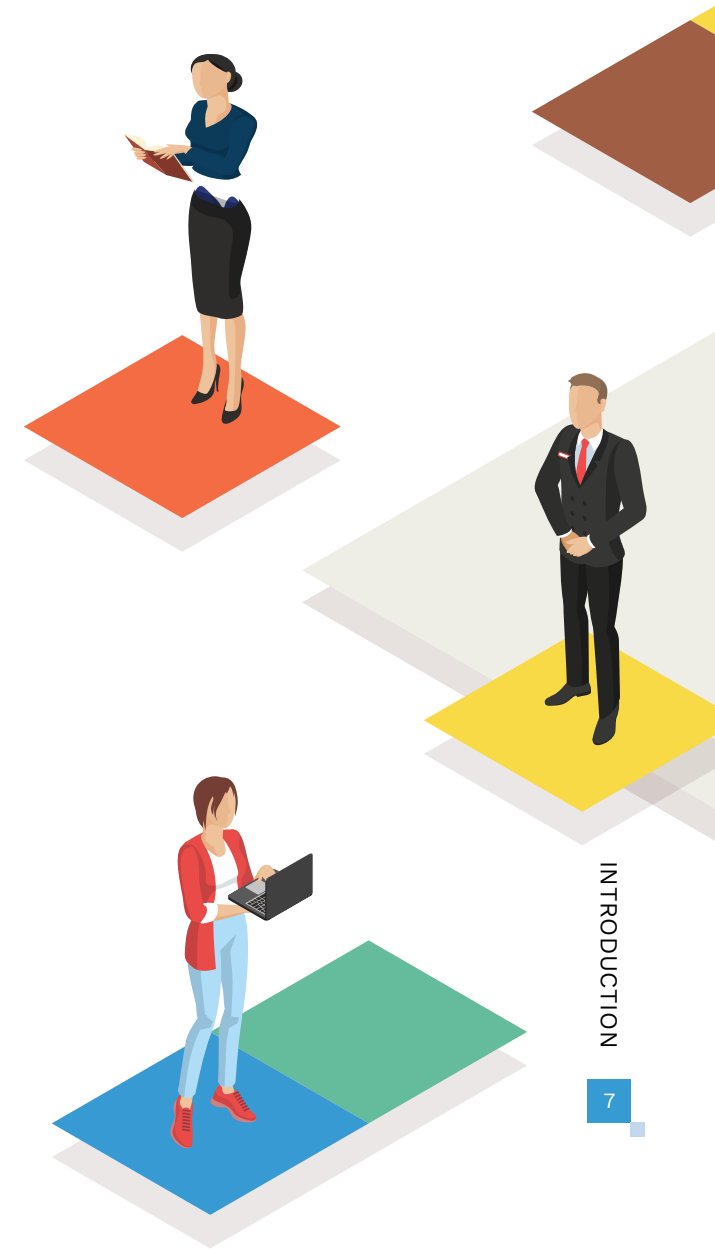
Human-centred design refers to the combination of design thinking with empathy, to purpose-built solutions for real-life problems faced by users every day. Delivering great service, in the digital world, is more challenging than ever now.

In enterprises today, design does not only refer to aesthetics or functional design elements such as where to place a handle on a teapot. Modern design encompasses the entire spectrum of product development, how companies provide services to their clients and the carefully curated user experience. Design shapes business decisions by providing calculated solutions to real problems, and having this integrated with their strategy is what defines a design-led organisation.

What does this mean for businesses?

A [McKinsey study](#) of over 300 international organisations found that firms that were design-led had two times as much growth in revenue and returns when compared to their industry's benchmark. The McKinsey Design Index (MDI) developed from this study defines four key themes of design-led operations as – User Experience, Cross-Functional Talent, Continuous Iteration and Analytical Leadership. It is applicable to all companies, from business-to-consumer (B2C) companies dealing with the needs of end users, to business-to-business (B2B) logistics providers, to financial institutions, and even government agencies.

Design allows organisations to be more responsive to changes and developments to the global marketplace, and to pivot quickly during crises. During times of uncertainty and volatility, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of design is more prominent than ever. Companies that were quickest



to react – and react well – to global conditions managed to flip a global crisis into business opportunities. Many businesses that failed to react, meanwhile, have since closed permanently.

Additionally, various studies have shown that design culture helps to increase an organisation’s absorptive capacity – defined as an organisation’s ability to absorb, recognise, collect and apply new information for commercial ends. This allows for speed and efficiency when responding to service disruptions and other such operational problems.

The Singapore Government has long been a champion of design. In many ways, the nation’s rapid growth and success could be credited to the use of “design-led governance”. In 2003, Dsg was set up under the then Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA), and has since been transferred to the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) in 2019, to position design as a key driver for human-centred innovation that uncovers and generates avenues for economic growth and success.

Dsg’s role as a national agency focuses on three areas. First, it helps organisations and enterprises use design as a strategy for business growth, and for excellent delivery of public services. Second, it nurtures industry-ready talents skilled in design and innovation, and engenders a design-minded workforce for the future economy. Third, it advances the Singapore brand through raising design appreciation on the home-ground, helping local design talents and firms go international, and making emotional connections with people across the world. To continue to achieve this, Dsg runs a variety of design-led initiatives and offers practical support to equip businesses with the right resources, skills and knowledge required for their day-to-day operations.

About this playbook

This playbook is the result of a year-long study conducted by ROHEI Learning & Consulting, and commissioned by Dsg. To gain a meaningful understanding of how design-led culture allows organisations

at the top of their game to strive for better, a qualitative study was conducted with 27 organisations.

All the organisations included in this playbook have a strategic presence in Singapore, and have received recognition for their well-designed products, services or user experiences. The organisations selected also represent a wide spread of industry and corporate governance styles, including family-run SMEs, multinational corporations (MNCs) with divisions scattered across the globe and government agencies.

The participating companies are:

- Accenture
- Aleph Labs
- Banyan Tree Group
- Benjamin Barker
- Bynd Artisan
- Carousell
- Changi Airport Group
- Cityneon
- Commune/Koda
- DBS
- Government Technology Agency of Singapore
- Grab
- Great Eastern
- HOPE Technik
- Huge
- IBM iX
- iHub Solutions
- Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore
- Johnson & Johnson
- Lo & Behold
- LUXASIA
- Mandai Wildlife Group
- National Library Board
- Philips
- SaladStop!
- Salesforce
- Tan Tock Seng Hospital

For more information on these companies, refer to page 158.

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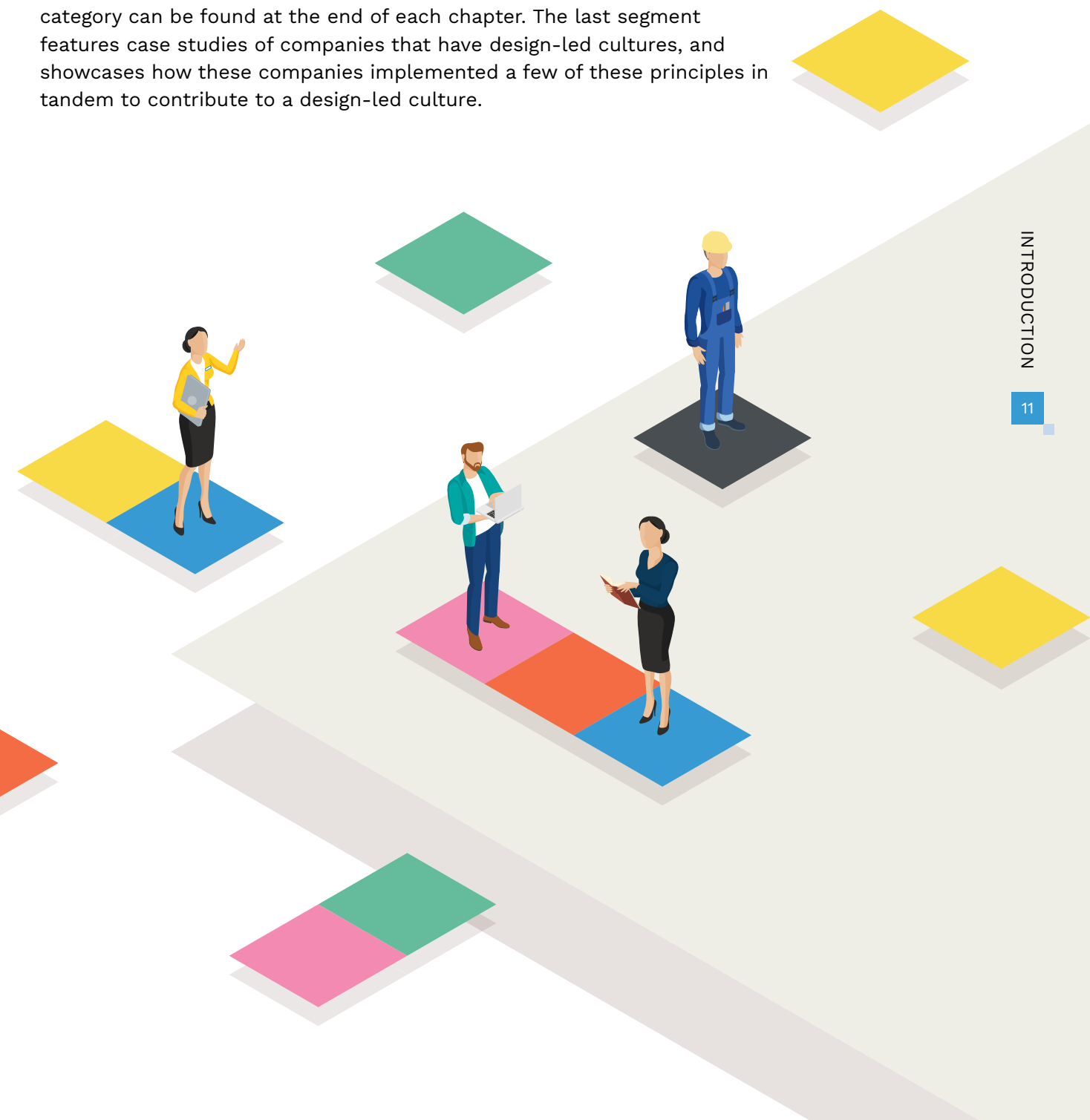
Forty-seven interviews were conducted with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Design or Human Resource (HR) and Culture Leaders, and other key stakeholders in these organisations. Ten focus group discussions were held with select groups of staff among these companies, in order to ensure the design centricity described by the leadership was experienced by the people on the ground.

Common themes and practices present in the organisational structures of these 27 organisations have been distilled into “22 Principles for Building a Design-Led Culture”. The 22 principles have been grouped into six broad categories:

How to use this playbook

It is recommended that you complete the Design-Led Culture Survey found on page 13 before proceeding to the segment on “22 Principles for Building a Design-Led Culture”. This self-assessment will help you to gain a better understanding of your organisation’s current culture in relation to design, identify areas of strength and point you towards the areas you can improve on.

Each principle will have recommendations based on your role in the organisation, and a summary of all the recommendations within that category can be found at the end of each chapter. The last segment features case studies of companies that have design-led cultures, and showcases how these companies implemented a few of these principles in tandem to contribute to a design-led culture.



Design-Led Culture Survey

Self-assessment tool

About the survey

The Design-Led Culture Survey is designed to help you quickly get a sense of your organisation's areas of strength or weakness across the six broad categories of design-led culture.

The survey consists of 56 statements, and each of them are rated on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Upon completion of this survey, you will find out how prevalent each of the six categories are in your organisation.

Since scoring is based on a Likert scale, it is important to note that the category scores are not absolute, but relative to one another. This means the scores are not designed to evaluate how design-led your organisational culture is, and an organisation that has a higher score may not be more design-led than one with a lower score.

Instead, the scores in the survey show how each category is ranked in your organisation, with the highest score being the category your organisation practises the most, and the lowest score being the category your organisation practises the least. These would then point you to which chapters are more relevant to examine what is currently working well and the areas to address for greater impact on your organisational culture.

Building a design-led culture

For a deeper dive into organisational culture, the Design-Led Culture Survey is best used in conjunction with training and consulting. A customised organisation-wide assessment can be conducted to identify specific areas of strength and focus. Analysis of the results can be done for the whole organisation as well as for the specific team/department to compare potentially different perceptions between leaders and staff. Where necessary, further diagnosis can be conducted as part of the sense-making before co-creating solutions and measuring their effectiveness.



Link to Design-Led Culture Survey

<https://www.rohei.com/design-led-culture-survey>

Reading Your Results

Across the six categories, where have you scored higher/lower?

1 Look at your Highest Score: _____

This is your perceived Area of Strength. Oftentimes, we may not be fully aware of what makes us good at what we are good at. Knowing the factors that contribute to our strengths enables us to sustain and capitalise on them. Refer to the relevant chapter for more information about this category.

2 Look at your Lowest Score: _____

This is your perceived Area of Focus. In your organisation, this is the area that requires the most immediate attention. Knowing specifically which actions you need to take will help to create the most impact on building a design-led culture. Refer to the relevant chapter for more information about this category.

1

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Visionary Leadership is required to help to drive an organisation's design-led culture. The principles in this chapter discuss how leaders can set the tone for the rest of the organisation. An organisation's leaders must have a clear vision of design that they want to implement, and ensure that this is communicated to everyone. The entire leadership team must also be united in sharing this message, yet remain flexible to adapt to changes in the market.

The principles covered in this chapter are:

1. Rally Around a User-Centric Vision
2. Align Leaders to Champion and Sponsor Design
3. Be Agile to Adjust Strategy

PRINCIPLE 1

Rally Around a User-Centric Vision

Set a user-centric vision beyond just key performance indicators (KPIs) that inspires a greater purpose and common direction.

Everything starts with an organisation's leaders, and nurturing a design culture is no different. While a leadership team sets the direction through its vision, the leaders also need to rally their organisation around a purpose. When staff understand how the organisation adds value to the lives of their customers, they will be inspired to embrace user centrality in their decision-making.

User centrality is not just about training staff to be polite to customers. Users include anyone that uses anything an organisation develops or implements. Staff, therefore, are also users that leaders need to prioritise. Having a user-centric vision as an organisation means every individual stakeholder, from senior management to employees on the ground, understand that improving the experience of all users is the organisation's main goal.





"Why have I worked for a company like Philips for more than 20 years? I wake up every morning knowing that everything that I will do and every decision that I will make contributes to saving a life – that really keeps me going. It gives me a purpose and the passion to continue."– Ivy Lai, CEO of Philips Singapore and Head of Finance for Philips ASEAN Pacific

Starting as a light bulb manufacturing company, Philips now has the vision of making the world healthier and more sustainable through innovation, with the goal of improving the lives of three billion people by 2030. This huge shift in vision was accompanied by a total change in their strategy and operations.

"Philips realised one of the biggest unmet needs in our world is in healthcare, which is why we have decided to pivot into healthcare and transformed ourselves into a leading health technology company, serving across the health continuum from health living, preventative care, diagnosis, treatment and recovery. This transformation has rallied everyone in the company around the vision to improve the quality of healthcare globally," said Head of Design for Philips ASEAN Pacific, Low Cheaw Hwei.



This transformation has rallied everyone in the company around the vision to improve the quality of healthcare globally.

In order to rally their staff around this vision, they divested many other parts of their businesses such as their consumer electronics arm, and even their original core of light bulb manufacturing.

Their vision of improving people's lives means that Philips views healthcare as a continuum. This is reflected in how they operate, moving from developing products to designing solutions based on extensive engagement with hospitals, doctors, users and patients. Their commitment to putting patients at the centre of what they do has even got them looking into preventative care, and not just designing solutions for diagnosis and recovery. With their vision as the basis for all strategic and operational decisions, Philips was able to build a shared purpose in their staff.



Changi Airport Group (CAG) has provided first-class passenger experiences for decades. The customer experience is CAG's North Star – not only for their staff, but for all the 200 vendors and agencies that operate within Changi Airport. This vision is the unifier for all decision-making in the airport.

With the vendors and agencies providing many different services to more than 60 million passengers a year, maintaining efficiency without compromising the passenger experience is no simple task. According to Group Senior Vice President, Transformation & Enterprise Development, CAG, Choy Dawen, CAG's management achieves this year after year by ensuring every individual stakeholder in Changi Airport keeps an eye on the prize – a better customer experience.

"Everyone in the organisation, whether you're in engineering, commercial, airport operations, or even if you're designing a new terminal, knows that (creating a great customer experience) is always the thing we're looking for," Mr Choy said.

For Terminal 4, CAG needed to design a centralised security screening instead of decentralised screening at the departure gates. CAG then worked with their various partners to understand their needs and constraints within the security screening process. Realising that the rigour required meant that some passengers would inevitably still need to stand in line for some time, CAG sought to improve the experience and reduce stress by installing a 70

Everyone in the
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metre long LED screen that played five to seven minute long clips, and ensuring that the space felt large and comfortable with a 13 metre high ceiling and full exposure to natural light. The passenger experience team had to manage the different vendors to find a compromise and balance between its needs and the passenger experience.

CAG's leaders also value constant communication and frequently engage with their vendor and agency partners. They explain how each partner's operations fit into the overall passenger experience so that when compromises are made, their partners understand that it is to allow CAG to curate the best possible experience for passengers.



This principle is featured in **Johnson & Johnson's** Case Study on page 146 of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 2

Align Leaders to Champion and Sponsor Design

Get buy-in from senior leaders for greater ownership of the vision to leverage design.

Design culture cannot be realised in an organisation if it is the responsibility of only one person. Instead, visionary leaders must ensure that the entire leadership team shares the same vision in advocating design. When the same message is shared throughout the entire organisation, staff will not receive mixed messages from different managers.

Creating this alignment requires the leaders to individually understand how design adds value to their departments. This can be done by using design to create solutions specific to their needs or by showing them how design can add business value to their departments, so that they experience the value of design culture first-hand.

PHILIPS

"It is a constant process of making people aware of what the design function does, what value we bring, what we can do. While the understanding varies, the heads of departments will understand if they see how we bring value to their businesses," said Low Cheaw Hwei, Head of Design for Philips ASEAN Pacific.

Mr Low approached this by applying design to create solutions for the various division leaders in Philips. His design team runs workshops to help the various divisions solve internal challenges. This ongoing process continually educates other division leaders about the capabilities and value of design.

Ivy Lai, CEO of Philips Singapore and Head of Finance for Philips ASEAN Pacific, shared that as a person trained in the field of finance, she initially struggled to see the value of design. She thought: *"After all, designers don't know anything about finance, designers don't know anything about IT, so how can they add value?"* But after being involved in these workshop sessions and gaining a deeper understanding of the value of design, she realised that it was important in every job function.

"If I make the final point of invoice processing too cumbersome, too complicated, too difficult for my customers, especially after they have had a fantastic experience with us thus far, they will still walk away with a bitter taste," Ms Lai said.

Today, Ms Lai continues to be a strong advocate for design in her department, making sure that even her financial controllers are prioritising design in their daily work.

But after being involved in these workshop sessions and gaining a deeper understanding of the value of design, she realised that it was important in every job function.

Mandai

WILDLIFE GROUP

“You need to get your leaders on board. Otherwise if they’re being sceptical to their teams, their teams will be lukewarm,” said Belina Lee, Group Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer & Head of Transformation Office, Mandai Wildlife Group (‘the Group’).

Ms Lee shared that in order to get the buy-in of the senior management team, they needed to experience it first-hand. For her, this meant including various members of the senior leadership in the Group’s initial design projects.

One of these flagship projects was “My Animal Buddy”, formally launched in April 2020. It was aimed at nurturing children’s love for animals and wildlife. The design process helped them to identify discrepancies between the organisation’s objectives and their users’ objectives. The Group wanted to focus on the importance of wildlife conservation, but realised that this was not a top-of-mind issue for parents, who were more concerned about helping their children to develop and thrive.

The design process also helped them to realise that while their users wanted to interact with animals, 90 per cent of them only physically visited the zoo once a year or less. Another key insight was that while many children wanted to keep pets at home, their parents were less keen. This changed the entire direction of the project, and if the team had developed it based on what they wanted, they would have totally missed the mark. Instead, they pursued a new line of questioning based on their user research, looking at how to provide more opportunities for children to interact with animals.



The positive outcomes of this project helped to convince the Group's heads of departments that design was the right tool for them.

As a result, My Animal Buddy developed into a website where users can sign up for a free subscription to befriend an animal at the zoo. They would then receive updates, fun facts and videos of the animal. They also get exclusive access to behind-the-scenes articles, live views and live chats with zookeepers to help them learn more about their animal friend. Initially planned for a launch in October 2020, it was soft-launched in April 2020 instead so that children could stay connected with their animal buddies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial results showed that 80 per cent of the families involved activated their subscriptions and continued to visit the website.

The positive outcomes of this project helped to convince the Group's heads of departments that design was the right tool for them, and even those who were initially sceptical voiced their approval of how helpful design was to the CEO and the rest of the Board. This helped to propagate the adoption of design culture throughout the organisation.



This principle is featured in **Tan Tock Seng Hospital's** Case Study on **page 154** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 3

Be Agile to Adjust Strategy

Be ready to pivot quickly to better serve changing user needs.

Having a design culture involves creating solutions based on user needs. Design-led organisations keep in touch with these changing needs to be more informed for future plans. Even when determining organisational strategy, leaders must be bold to kill sacred cows and make radical changes when necessary.

Rigid business structures, corporate hierarchies or decision-making processes are detrimental to design. Instead, leaders need to be armed with foresight to anticipate future user needs, coupled with boldness to make major changes to the business according to these needs, all while being agile. Agility to adjust and evolve, while considering the various needs, can make all the difference in a business' success.



From providing the first at-home computers to developing the first chess engine to beat a world champion, IBM has always stood at the forefront of design. To keep up with the rapidly evolving world of technology, IBM Design was established in order to ensure design culture remained at the core of everything IBM does. IBM iX, a consulting arm that helps clients build software solutions through the use of design, was also started to ensure design is involved in every stage of a client's IBM experience.

These new divisions of IBM were established as part of a corporate shift from being product-focused to becoming solution-focused. Using their own IBM Enterprise design thinking framework, combined with a belief in agile deliveries, IBM implemented a policy of having no limits to revisions on their projects. Rather than approaching clients as a software service provider that simply helps them to design or develop software, IBM iX takes a consultative approach that allows clients to continually come back to them.

"What we do is we are kind of like your physician, your doctor. So whenever you're sick, you come back to us," said Ari Widjanarko, Design Practice Lead, ASEAN IBM iX. A doctor would not turn a patient away because they come back too often, a doctor would just try to end the patient's problem as quickly as possible. Similarly, instead of allocating a finite amount of resources or time to a client, IBM believes in the ongoing process of collaboration, refining ideas and making adjustments as needed. This ensures that products can be created to match users' needs as seamlessly as possible.

Using their own IBM Enterprise design thinking framework, combined with a belief in agile deliveries, IBM implemented a policy of having no limits to revisions on their projects.

LUXASIA

In September 2016, LUXASIA started “LX21”, its transformation programme aimed at integrating digital competencies with a brick-and-mortar core in order to become a truly omnichannel platform and effectively double in size by 2021. The roadmap has experienced multiple enhancements since then in response to evolutions in economic conditions and consumer preferences.

The leadership of LUXASIA reviews its strategic roadmap every six to nine months so that the organisation remains agile and adaptable. This is in line with the “Fail Fast” mindset adopted by its Group CEO, Dr Wolfgang Baier, which entails having courage to try new projects, embrace lessons from them whenever they fail, quickly integrate these lessons into the team’s psyche, and try again from a much stronger position.

This enables a learning culture that is constantly improving and iterating – resulting in valuable insights and successes based on the courage to try and even failing.

COVID-19 caused a change in business conditions that no company saw coming. With lockdowns and movement restrictions globally, retail and physical consumer experiences were brought to a complete standstill for months. With most of the world’s shopping pivoting online, LUXASIA needed to continue to engage and retain customers in the digital space – without sacrificing the VIP experience customers usually have in-store.

Building on its years of work in building an omnichannel presence, LUXASIA swiftly re-engineered its processes to meet these new needs. For example, their retail staff – now working from home – took their beauty consultation services online. Regular customers would get prompted if their makeup supplies

The leadership of
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were running low or nearing expiry. LUXASIA’s Customer Engagement Officers proactively reached out to their VIP customers online to recommend new products tailored to their interests. In the Philippines, LUXASIA even piloted a beauty drive-through, where customers could collect their purchases without even stepping out of their cars to get into a mall, to minimise exposure to the virus.

Rather than being restricted by a rigid strategy and fixed methodologies, LUXASIA’s commitment to being agile saw its business meet a set of new and unforeseen needs.



This principle is featured in the **Government Technology Agency of Singapore’s Case Study on page 134** of this playbook.

Recommendations



A

PRINCIPLE 1

Rally around a user-centric vision

- Check if current vision and mission are written in a way that inspires a common purpose towards serving your organisation's stakeholders.
- Continually reinforce the vision by incorporating it into everyday decision-making and corporate language.
- Ensure that the vision serves all users and cascade it throughout the organisation.



B

- Embed the vision into the hiring and promotion process, and ensure candidates and staff resonate and embody the vision.
- Help staff to connect and understand by linking the impact of their work to the vision.
- Build an internal structure that continually reminds and reinforces the vision, e.g. through onboarding.



C

- Identify ways that the organisation's vision and mission resonate with you and give purpose to your daily work.
- Use the organisation's vision and mission as a guide for your daily work decisions.
- Rather than only meeting your own goals and KPIs, review how your work contributes to the larger organisation's goals as a whole.

PRINCIPLE 2

Align leaders to champion and sponsor design

A

- Increase buy-in by implementing design projects that will help the different leadership stakeholders see the benefit of using design in real-world application and experience tangible business results.
- Engage sceptical leaders early in the process to get buy-in.
- Highlight customers' viewpoints and stakeholders' needs in regular senior management conversations, not just when working on design projects.

B

- Garner support from senior leadership for staff to participate in design workshops and socialise design within the leadership team.
- Identify leaders/staff who can champion design and provide them with the necessary training, tools and resources.
- Arrange opportunities for Design Champions to engage and present at senior leadership meetings for greater exposure and alignment.

C

- Find ways to add value to different stakeholders and help them to see the value of design.
- Start with small projects and collate positive results that can be presented to leaders in order to get buy-in.
- Take ownership in understanding and applying design in your areas of work.

PRINCIPLE 3

Be agile to adjust strategy

A

- Keep a pulse on trends to understand current and future user needs in order to pivot quickly when the need arises.
- Be open to redefine what is the root issue or problem statement despite already having set goals.
- Review internal organisational structures and processes based on the needs and trends of users to create bespoke solutions for them.

B

- Ensure that prospective staff have the ability to pivot and deal with ambiguity.
- Organise regular sessions for staff to come together for sense-making of unmet user needs, trends, best practices and tech adoption.
- Continually look out for pain points users (external and internal) are experiencing and incentivise staff who propose solutions to address these issues.

C

- Seek to understand client's goals and motivations, and avoid creating products/solutions based on just specifications and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- Understand the purpose behind organisational goals, and not follow orders blindly.
- Share best practices and customer insights within the organisation to better sense and meet evolving needs.

2

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Inspirational Leadership refers to how an organisation's leaders rally everyone else towards a design-led culture. Apart from setting and communicating a shared vision of design, leaders must embody these values and behaviours. They must be willing to be on the ground to listen and galvanise the team when there are mistakes or issues. Leaders must also actively seek out and recognise desirable design behaviours, to reinforce the design-led culture.

The principles covered in this chapter are:

4. Walk the Talk and Model Design
5. Connect Directly with Users
6. No Blame When Failure Occurs
7. Hunt for and Celebrate Design in Action

PRINCIPLE 4

Walk the Talk and Model Design

Leaders define acceptable behaviours by their actions. Design culture must be seen, not just heard.

To inspire staff to adopt design, leaders have to practise it themselves. Design must be visible in leaders' interactions with staff and external stakeholders, like customers and suppliers. Design must be seen in action during decision-making and through the intentional consideration of users' needs.

Leaders who bring design into everyday interactions will consider the experience of the users and are sensitive to their needs at various touchpoints. Leaders must also hold themselves to the same standards that they ask of their staff. Whether it is regarding being bold to challenge conventions, being sensitive to users' needs or being adaptable to changing situations, leaders must lead by example.





iHub Solutions (iHub) is a homegrown warehouse and logistics services provider in Singapore and the wider Southeast Asian region. iHub specialises in vertical markets like furniture, fashion, healthcare and e-commerce.

Founder and Managing Director of iHub, Koh San Joo, has high expectations of how people in his organisation behave, and his expectations go well beyond prompt delivery times. *“There must be honesty, sincerity, and genuine care for customers. Do not just earn their money; you must care for their business. And care for the environment too; do not just earn money then pollute the world,”* he said.

Mr Koh believes that it is his responsibility to care for his staff, to ensure that they are able to work in a safe and clean environment, and have the tools required to make their work as painless as possible. He actively looks to invest in equipment that can help his staff. Instead of getting his staff to manually shrink wrap pallets, he invested in a



There must be honesty,
sincerity, and genuine care
for customers.

shrink wrap machine that can do that with just the push of a button. Instead of manually jacking and moving these pallets, he bought an electronic jack for his staff to zip around quickly. *“It is faster, safer and helps everyone. We are looking at all these things every day,”* explained Mr Koh.

Mr Koh also believes in being on the ground with his staff to understand their realities. As he puts it: *“You have to go in and dig the trenches, and lead from there. Because you will face extreme difficulties.”* This helps him to understand the real needs of his staff, and allows him to find ways to make improvements. These can range from giving them new air-conditioned vans so they can drive their families around, making sure the warehouse is properly painted, cleaned and maintained, and even refusing to do business with clients who do not respect iHub’s staff.

By personally modelling user centricity in the way he treats his staff, he encourages them to adopt a similar approach when facing customers.



HOPE Technik's 10 Rules of Engagement form the basis of their culture and determine how they work. More than words on a wall, these 10 Rules of Engagement are demonstrated by their leaders and brought to life in their daily interactions with staff.

When new staff are hired in leadership positions, their onboarding is as much about understanding these rules of engagement as it is about understanding their job scope. They are assigned mentors and have conversations with members of the senior leadership who share with them what is expected in terms of how they lead their teams, how they interact with staff and how they work with one another. How well they embrace HOPE Technik's culture is a key consideration for passing their probation period.

"HOPE Technik prides itself on having a people-centric culture, like we are all cogs in a running machine," says Holden Ngoh, People and Culture Manager at HOPE Technik. "We take pride in our rules of engagement and those who are in leadership roles do their due diligence to instil this into their team, establishing and carrying on HOPE Technik's design-led culture to our new teammates." As such, Mr Ngoh believes that they must protect it, and ensure that leaders model behaviours that build this culture and not destroy it.

More than words
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Rules of Engagement
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daily interactions
with staff.



This principle is featured in **Banyan Tree Group's** Case Study on **page 122** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 5

Connect Directly with Users

Be directly involved in understanding internal and external users.

Leaders cannot inspire user centricity in their staff if they themselves are out of touch with ground realities. Since leaders set the direction for the rest of their teams, an organisation that is user-centric needs leaders that truly seek to understand their users.

This means going beyond looking at reports or research done by others. Leaders need to engage users directly, or put themselves through the user experience, to have a personal appreciation for the user experience.





"It's not a design thing, it's an anybody thing." – Randy Hunt,
Head of Design, Grab Asia

Grab's vision is to improve the lives of millions across Southeast Asia, and their leaders lead the change. The Grab management gets down on the ground and experiences the work for themselves. One of the first things that Grab does to help all their staff understand their users is to immerse them in the user experience journey.

All staff, including management, are required to spend a day as a delivery man or driver as part of their onboarding. This allows them to experience what it is like for their partners, and also to understand how customers use the Grab app on a daily basis.



A keen understanding
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A keen understanding of what their riders and driver partners go through keeps them focused on being customer-centric in the decisions that they make. It also gives them the authenticity and credibility to communicate to the rest of the organisation that customer experience matters.

Additionally, product managers are encouraged to join designers on their research trips. These research trips allow managers to go to the different regions that Grab operates, and help them to get a better sense of the users there and what their unique needs are.

The data collected from this research helps the organisation to make decisions about what their priorities should be, and allows leaders to make informed decisions about how their product can be improved for users.



Bynd Artisan is an experiential leather and paper accessories producer. Beyond making personalised leather or paper products, Bynd Artisan offers workshops and more for their customers to try their hand at craft work. CEOs and Founders James Quan and Winnie Chan make it a point to go down to their stores to engage their frontline staff regularly.

By doing this, the founders conduct first-hand research about customers' trends like their likes and dislikes, and their sellable products. Information gathered is then brought back to their design and marketing teams to develop more compelling products and better customer outreach.

This approach to understanding users is also applied to their internal users, i.e. their staff. Mr Quan and Ms Chan hold regular "Coffee Sessions" with their staff, to listen to and address their concerns. These informal interactions with staff give them insight into the employee experience and what their immediate needs are. This then allows them to design specific solutions that can meet their needs and improve their experiences.

For example, one of the biggest challenges the company faced was to change their image from that of a stationery manufacturer into that of a boutique brand. This required redesigning jobs for their craftsmen who had been working at the company for over three decades. The founders directly engaged with their staff to discuss development plans and understand their realities in dealing with this shift. They managed to discover that their staff were keen on taking on more customer-facing roles, which led to them developing and offering specialty craft workshops for customers, creating an additional revenue stream and a new way for staff to engage with customers.

By personally engaging with their staff and customers, Bynd Artisan's founders are able to make more informed decisions when it comes to designing both internal and external experiences.



This principle is featured in **Tan Tock Seng Hospital's** Case Study on **page 154** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 6

No Blame When Failure Occurs

With staff giving their best effort, leaders take responsibility for team failure. When problems arise, teams focus on finding solutions instead of assigning blame.



When considering how to inspire employees to be experimental or creative in their ideation process, one vital component is for leaders to provide an environment where it is safe to fail. This does not mean that leaders do not set constraints or expectations. Rather, there is a need to balance performance with failure, and define conditions within which failure can be tolerated or even encouraged.

A key to allowing this to happen is to resist the temptation to assign blame when failure occurs. Some leaders implement this through the notion of "failing forward" – failures that enable progression in the right direction are acceptable. Others take failure as a learning opportunity, encouraging new mistakes to occur if their staff can show they have learnt from them.



“The first thing is, what do you do when mistakes happen? Do you punish the staff? To me, I make it very clear. If it is something new, I pay, as long as you do not repeat it,” says Koh San Joo, Founder and Managing Director of iHub Solutions (iHub). Mr Koh’s perspective on mistakes stems from a desire to allow his employees to experiment and try new ways to meet their users’ needs. This gives iHub a competitive advantage, because staff are free to experiment and find ways to exceed customer expectations.

But not every mistake is equal. Mr Koh has a set of guiding principles on the types of mistakes that are warmly embraced and those that must be nipped in the bud. Acceptable mistakes include new mistakes, which can often reveal an unforeseen clients’ need or expose key learning points. Mistakes that are repeated but have a different root cause can also surface new areas of improvement. Mr Koh shared an anecdote to illustrate how these mistakes can be capitalised on.

He recalls an incident where his team needed to scramble and work overtime in order to fulfil a large order, and how the incident revealed latent inefficiencies in iHub’s work processes. From this incident, the team reviewed their system and identified areas that were slowing them down, one of which was the stamping of the company chop. The team then worked with the IT department to redesign the process so that

Mr Koh has a set of guiding principles on the types of mistakes that are warmly embraced and those that must be nipped in the bud.



this inefficiency could be eliminated. *“Fixing little daily things like that actually help because there is a multiplier effect,”* shared Mr Koh. He further explained that this solution-focused approach is a standard procedure for iHub. *“If there is an error, then we will investigate and have a corrective action report. We do not just solve the problem, we also want to understand why it happened,”* he explained.

Mr Koh believes that errors are bound to happen, and is open to understanding these errors rather than to point fingers. He even sets aside a budget for mistakes, which goes towards rectifying them and investing in systemic improvements that can prevent such mistakes from recurring. iHub staff are also sent for training to equip them with tools to review mistakes and identify root causes, such as the fishbone diagram.

However, Mr Koh emphasised that mistakes that are repeated despite warnings are not tolerated as kindly. *“For those, we will give a warning letter or even terminate the staff. We have done it, but it is very rare,”* Mr Koh said.



“Allowing people to fail has to go hand in hand with their motivation to be the best because just failing all the time is not good enough. They have to want to become the best.” – Ari Widjanarko, Design Practice Lead, ASEAN IBM iX

Mr Widjanarko shared his view that as leaders, one of the key roles is to help a team to experiment and give staff the autonomy to develop their own solutions. This requires leaders to create buffers for mistakes, and to make sure it is safe to fail. IBM iX embraces this through a unique value – “treasure wild ducks”. *“Treasure wild ducks means you have to go beyond your comfort level to try to find something that you believe in that is new,”* shared Mr Widjanarko. To encourage this, leaders have to provide support and help their teams to build trust with their clients. As Mr Widjanarko said, *“You have to be ready to back them, so you have to be there when they fail. You have to help them face the client.”*

This willingness to accommodate failure is predicated on having defined constraints and directions, and is not about giving employees blank cheques to do what they want. For IBM iX, this takes the form of “hill statements”. This term is borrowed from the military, and is likened to a general telling his men, “this is the hill I want to take”. It is a statement of intent that sets the goals and defines the objectives of

This willingness to accommodate failure is predicated on having defined constraints and directions, and is not about giving employees blank cheques to do what they want.



each project. Within these parameters, the team is given the autonomy to determine how they achieve that goal.

Any mistakes made along the way are acceptable, because they are made in the correct direction and no mistakes would be fatal. *“They can experiment in the sprint cycles and the agile delivery. It may not work. We could lose one cycle, or lose two cycles, but we know for a fact that we’re going towards the right direction,”* said Mr Widjanarko. These hill statements, together with retrospectives to help to guide growth and learning from mistakes made, enable IBM iX’s staff to experiment and iterate.



This principle is featured in **HOPE Technik’s** Case Study on **page 138** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 7

Hunt for and Celebrate Design in Action

Be intentional to find and tell stories that reinforce design.

Part of what helps to inspire staff to adopt a culture of design is seeing these desired behaviours get rewarded and celebrated. When leaders share stories of design and recognise those who display such behaviours, it sends a message to the rest of the organisation that design is valued.

Leaders need to be proactive in looking for these stories and showcasing them. Such stories help to bring design to life, making it more concrete for staff. They also help to set guidelines and expectations around design. In most of the companies we spoke to, this principle is brought out through leaders collecting and sharing stories organisation-wide or through public awards.



For a company as large as Johnson & Johnson (J&J), with over 100,000 staff globally, it is more vital than ever to set guidelines and expectations for desirable behaviours. J&J's approach to encouraging a design-centric workforce is to craft a strong narrative based on their mission statement – the Credo. The Credo clearly places users as the top priority for the organisation, and this narrative is reinforced wherever possible.

J&J's leaders curate opportunities for their staff to see design in action. They bring in users to tell their personal stories about how J&J's work has touched their lives, such as a patient who thanked them for developing a drug that extended his life and allowed him to watch his children grow up. By emphasising these stories of how user-centric design has impacted real people, J&J helps to personalise the meaning of design, making it resonate better with their staff.

At company summits and meetings, time is carved out for leaders to talk about each section of the Credo, and employees are asked to share how it has come to life for them. These can take up to half a day and is an intentional process to highlight the value of design. Getting staff to share their stories makes design relatable to their colleagues, allowing them to better understand what good design looks like and sets expectations for how every employee should behave.

By emphasising these stories of how user-centric design has impacted real people, J&J helps to personalise the meaning of design, making it resonate better with their staff.



BANYAN TREE
GROUP

Ho Ren Yung, Senior Vice President of Brand HQ, Banyan Tree Group, shared that an important part of encouraging staff to engage in ground-up innovation is to recognise and celebrate it when it occurs. To facilitate this, the X-Change platform was introduced. This platform allows associates from various properties to share their ideas and new solutions, regardless of whether or not they have been implemented. The focus of this platform is not to give recognition to successfully implemented initiatives, but simply to celebrate the action of being engaged in innovation or experimentation, thereby encouraging such behaviour. *"We're just looking for new ideas, which means that you don't, at the beginning, look at the results but just the ideation part of it,"* says Ms Ho.

At their annual meetings, Banyan Tree Group showcases and awards the best staff ideas and innovations, as well as appoints service ambassadors who have demonstrated user centricity. But it does not stop there. Founder and Executive Chairman, Mr Ho Kwon Ping, personally collects stories from their properties where staff have engaged in innovation initiatives, and recognises them in group-wide addresses and emails. Other organisational leaders also reinforce this message during their own town halls and team meetings, to encourage risk-taking behaviour and experimentation in their own departments.

An important part of encouraging staff to engage in ground-up innovation is to recognise and celebrate it when it occurs.



Beyond finding success stories, Banyan Tree Group also believes that it is important to find stories that help to make a case for why design is necessary. These stories show staff that design is vital to the continued success of the company and inspire them to adopt design. *"One big thing is what got you here won't get you there,"* says Ms Ho. She also emphasised the importance of creating and repeating these narratives intentionally and persistently. *"Don't underestimate the power of narrative and storytelling in cultural change, and don't get tired of it."*



This principle is featured in **Johnson & Johnson's** Case Study on page 146 of this playbook.

Recommendations

PRINCIPLE 4

Walk the talk and model design

- Demonstrate your commitment to human centricity by role modelling it in your interactions with staff and customers.
- Hold yourself accountable to the same standards as you do your team.
- Organise and set up relevant practices with teams to demonstrate and model the desired values, practices and behaviours, e.g. periodic team check-ins.

- Hire and promote leaders who role model desired behaviours and hold themselves to the same standards they expect of their staff.
- Co-create as an organisation the desired values and behaviours and share them with leaders and staff to incorporate it in their work.
- Collate success stories of how leaders or staff have modelled design in their behaviours and communicate it to the rest of the organisation.

- Identify and encourage managers who model design behaviours by being responsive.
- Have the courage to lead in design behaviours, even if you are not a people manager.
- Take the initiative to share best practices of how to be user-centric with fellow colleagues.

PRINCIPLE 5

Connect directly with users

- Approach your stakeholders personally, listen to them and act on their feedback.
- Do not rely solely on staff reports in decision-making, especially where ground realities are important.
- Personally experience the users' journey to understand their pain points and motivations.

- Find opportunities for leaders to connect with staff, understand their realities on the ground and surface their needs at the workplace.
- Create opportunities for staff to engage with their users or immerse themselves in the role of their users from time to time.
- Create narratives and highlight role model leaders who intentionally connect with staff or the external users.

- Find opportunities for leaders to connect directly with users on a more personal and informal basis to understand their needs and realities.
- Reach out to your users directly in your scope of work to better understand their needs.
- Look for opportunities where you can personally experience the user journey.

PRINCIPLE 6

No blame when failure occurs

- Within a given parameter, create buffers for mistakes to be made for quicker learning and to encourage experimentation.
- Hold the team accountable for deliverables, but take responsibility when failure occurs.
- Be solution-focused when things go wrong. Instead of blaming or going on a witch-hunt, ask – How do we make it better? What is our “get-well” plan? How do we not let it happen again? Systemically, where did we go wrong?

- Ensure individuals are not punished or made scapegoats for mistakes.
- When hiring, consider character traits like resilience and how candidates respond to setbacks.
- Set up procedures to investigate why mistakes are made, and focus on solutions and learning rather than fault-finding.

- View mistakes as a way to learn and get better.
- Accept mistakes and failure as part of the process of learning and experimentation.
- When mistakes are made, focus on finding the solution as a team instead of trying to blame someone.

PRINCIPLE 7

Hunt for and celebrate design in action

- Intentionally seek out and collect stories that can reinforce the value of design.
- Ensure that stories that have real impact are preserved and continually shared.
- Prioritise the creation of narratives that highlight the impact of design.

- Amplify user stories that are related not only to designers but also to the rest of the organisation.
- Propagate stories that show how the organisation has used design to impact the world with their staff and new hires.
- Create platforms such as awards where staff can be publicly recognised and rewarded for embracing design.

- When hearing success stories, reflect on what resonates with you and how you can implement design in your own work.
- Be willing to share with others how design has impacted your work and everyday decision-making.
- When you see colleagues exhibiting desired behaviours, amplify these examples by celebrating and sharing them with others.

3

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In the midst of any significant change, it is important that leaders do not solely focus on processes, but put equal emphasis on managing their people through the change. Relational Leadership is about how leaders can help to guide their staff through the transition to a design-led culture, and ensure that they remain involved and included in the process. The principles here discuss the importance of establishing psychological safety in design, actively ensuring that staff feel heard and understood, and how interpersonal relationships help to ease the adoption of design.

The principles covered in this chapter are:

8. Make It Safe to be Honest with Leaders
9. Invite Input and Respond Actively
10. Socialise Design Through Conversations and Relationships

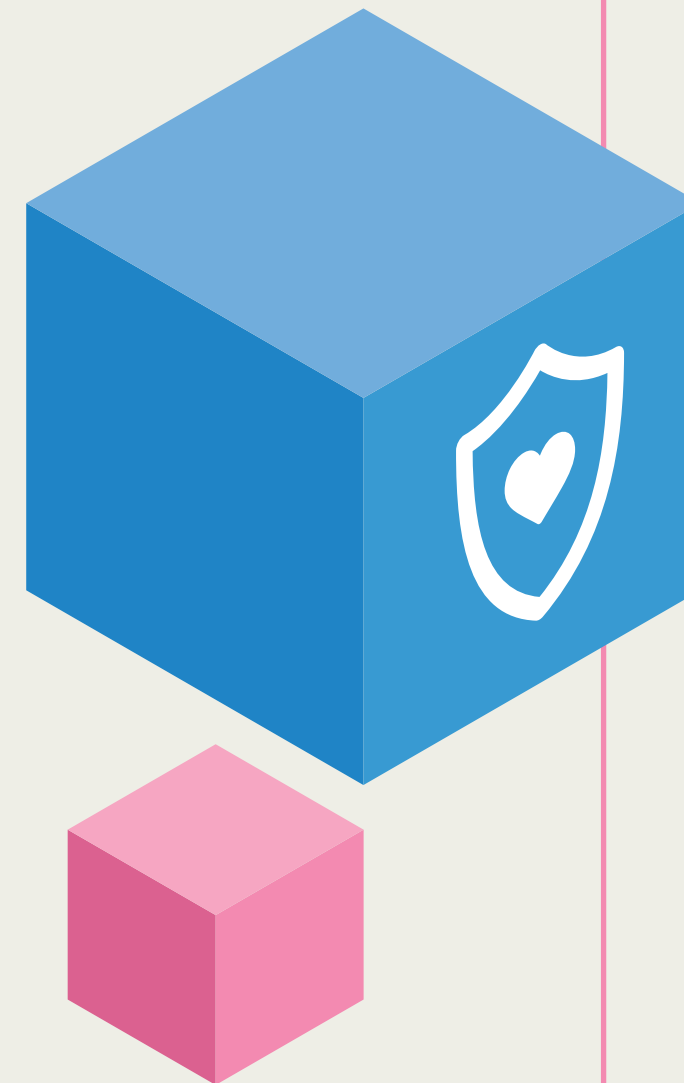
PRINCIPLE 8

Make It Safe to be Honest with Leaders

Leaders remove both institutional and psychological barriers for staff to openly and honestly connect with them.

Achieving user-centric design requires a smooth flow of information between users and decision makers. Otherwise, decision makers will not be able to steer the organisation towards meeting user needs. To facilitate this, relational leaders create safety for staff to be honest with them. Without this safety, staff will tell the leaders what they think they want to hear instead of what they think users really need.

Creating this safety can be done by overcoming institutional barriers such as rigid hierarchies or lack of platforms for feedback. This also needs to be accompanied by the removal of psychological barriers such as the fear of making mistakes or looking foolish.





“Be a servant leader, be on the ground.” – Nelson Yap, CEO, Benjamin Barker

Benjamin Barker’s CEO, Nelson Yap, believes that all his staff want to do their jobs well. Because they want to do their jobs well, they may be afraid to make mistakes and end up covering them up.

To prevent this, Mr Yap creates safe environments by modelling vulnerability. *“If I make a mistake, I own up to my mistake, and I say sorry if needed.”* He believes that by doing that, he gives his staff the permission to make mistakes as well. *“I will address the whole company and be vulnerable in front of the whole company if needed, so as not to be misrepresented or be just a boss.”* By doing this, Mr Yap creates open channels of communication with his staff and encourages them to share their realities.

Mr Yap also understands that it is crucial for leaders to be careful of their response to staff when they give feedback. Leaders need to probe for more in-depth answers, understand their roadblocks and help to address them.

Leaders need to probe for more in-depth answers, understand their roadblocks and help to address them.



Dr Eugene Soh, CEO of Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), personally conducts a programme called “Voices 8000”, a platform for staff to speak directly to him about any issues they face at work. For this programme to work, Dr Soh believes that psychological safety is vital.

To ensure that staff can speak honestly during these meetings, no names are captured so that views and opinions are not attributed. Trust within the group is also maintained by ensuring that no one shares what is said with others. David Dhevarajulu, Executive Director, Centre for Healthcare Innovation at TTSH, shared that a staff’s supervisor who came to know what was shared and subsequently counselled his staff for giving feedback at this meeting was given a stern warning.

As a result of these measures, staff can be assured that what they say in these meetings will not leave the room, and are able to speak freely. In fact, a staff member once stood up and cried while sharing her frustration with supporting the other departments. Because she was able to be vulnerable and honest in sharing her realities, colleagues from other departments realised the negative impact of their behaviour. This led to greater empathy between the various departments and changed the way they considered the needs of internal stakeholders in their work.

To ensure that staff can speak honestly during these meetings, no names are captured so that views and opinions are not attributed.



This principle is featured in **DBS’ Case Study on page 130** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 9

Invite Input and Respond Actively

Beyond just collecting feedback from staff, acting on the feedback is necessary to reinforce staff's openness to share in future.

Relational leaders are not defined simply by their willingness to listen to employee input. What is more important is the actions they take to address these needs. When employees can see that their feedback truly make a difference, they are more likely to provide open and honest feedback in the future.

However, this does not mean that every suggestion or comment is accepted and addressed, especially if the organisation feels that it is not in their best interests. When this happens, the rationale needs to be clearly and transparently articulated, so that employees do not feel that they are being ignored. This also helps them to understand their leaders better, so that future ideas will be more aligned.



"Once a month we have a representative from every outlet sit down at a round table with me – junior level, supervisor and below, no managers. It's called the ideaLAB, and you're supposed to come with ideas from your outlet that you want to introduce to me." – Andrew Ing, former Executive Director, The Lo & Behold Group

When conducting these ideaLAB sessions, Mr Ing refrains from giving advice or providing solutions. Instead, he tries to listen from their perspective, asks questions, and shares from his own experiences. More importantly, Mr Ing shared that he writes everything down, and either provides an answer on the spot or promises to come back with the answers.

Ideas that can be realistically implemented are given the green light for employees to experiment with, and those that are not, are carefully explained. *"If I know someone's asking me something that I know is not possible, I will just go, 'Actually we can't do it because it doesn't make business sense.' Then the person will be okay because they just want to be heard,"* Mr Ing said.

When the ideaLAB first started, Mr Ing mainly received complaints or requests for more resources. However, when people started seeing that they were truly being listened to and taken seriously, they started suggesting more ideas for genuine improvements for both client and employee experiences.

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With a vision of transforming the public libraries into communal spaces of learning and knowledge sharing, the National Library Board (NLB) underwent a major restructuring exercise in 2015.

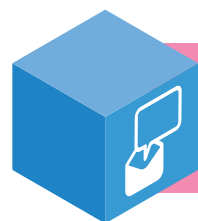
Job roles were redesigned to suit a persona more geared towards community engagement. Library Officers needed to pick up skills to support reading and learning for the community, such as giving book recommendations and storytelling, and Librarians needed to take on projects targeting specific demographics.

To facilitate these changes, NLB took a human-centric approach which heavily involved their staff in the process. They conducted focus group discussions to gather feedback about what staff thought of their new job roles and what help they needed to fulfil them. These focus group discussions helped them to formulate plans to ensure that staff were adequately supported through this transition.

From these discussions, a mentorship system was developed where Library Officers were paired with Librarians, and they underwent training and observations for storytelling. Library Officers would then have a dialogue with their Librarian mentor on what their comfort level was with regard to this new scope, and how they could be supported to reach the competency levels required.

With this push towards community engagement and greater digitisation of library services, the physical spaces were also revamped. Staff in the branches were consulted on what improvements could be made to their workspaces, and prototypes were developed for testing. Their input directly impacted the way libraries were designed, giving staff a greater sense of control and ownership over their work environment.

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This principle is featured in the **National Library Board** and **Tan Tock Seng Hospital's** Case Studies on **page 150** and **page 154** of this playbook.

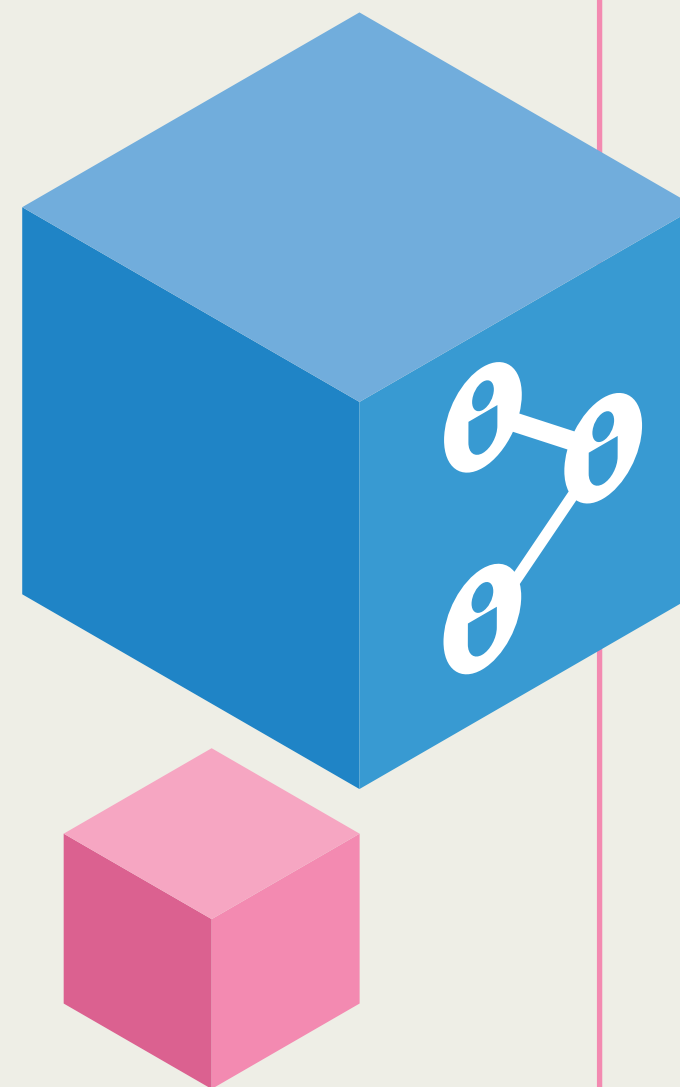
PRINCIPLE 10

Socialise Design Through Conversations and Relationships

Create opportunities for conversations that build relationships and add value.

Adopting design can often be a radical change from existing processes. When driving design in an organisation that already has well-established practices and processes, a directive approach may not be the most effective. Instead, relational leaders focus on also building relationships, using small conversations to broach the idea of user-centric design. This helps to create a smoother transition, easing the shift of mindsets and working styles required.

Leaders must be intentional about making time to build relationships with staff and sow the seeds of design. These can be done through formal or informal conversations, but must be consistently practised in order to normalise design. Doing so allows ideas and experiments to be more easily accepted and adopted.





Changi Airport Group (CAG) has a set of 10 principles that embody its values as an organisation. Despite being called the “Leadership Principles”, these principles guide the behavioural expectations for all staff and encompass design behaviours such as building trust, experimentation, collaboration and innovation. These principles are worded to be applicable to everyone in the organisation, including individual contributors.

Considering that CAG employs about 2,000 staff in roles ranging from customer service to firefighting, this was no easy task. As Shirley Cheong, Vice President of the People Team at CAG shares, *“If you go to the firemen and talk about experimentation, they’ll be like, ‘I do not experiment when it comes to fighting a fire.’”* Getting everyone in the organisation to adopt these design behaviours requires having conversations with them to help to apply design to their various job roles.

For CAG, this meant organising focus group discussions where the CEO could sit with various stakeholders to understand their work processes and see how the principles could be applied to them.

“We first used a draft deck to talk through what resonates and what didn’t. People were very candid with their views; and they said, ‘This doesn’t apply to us, why do we need to focus on this?’ They gave very good examples, and when there were certain things they didn’t understand or the words didn’t connect, they suggested alternatives. So, we took all these on board and shaped the current Leadership Principles,” shared Ms Cheong.

Getting everyone in the organisation to adopt these design behaviours requires having conversations with them to help to apply design to their various job roles.



However, the conversations do not stop there. CAG continues to engage with their staff to help them to better apply these behaviours in their work. The People Team at CAG approaches different functions within the organisation to help them to contextualise these Leadership Principles, and think about how they connect with it and translate it to their roles.

The leadership team is also expected to have these conversations on a regular basis with their staff. The performance management process at CAG has three key milestones where managers speak with their staff about the Leadership Principles. *“We say that we want conversations ongoing throughout the year, but if for whatever reasons they don’t take place throughout the year, there are still these three points where they must happen,”* explained Ms Cheong on the importance of setting aside time to have these conversations.



Central to Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) approach to serving their users is an emphasis on relationships. This mindset of relationship building permeates everything that they do, and empowers the organisation to better collaborate to meet the needs of their various users.

One of the key tasks for any leader in J&J is helping new members to build social capital. With 130,000 staff worldwide, this social capital is vital in tapping into the organisation's collective knowledge and experience. Leaders will help new hires to find out who they can turn to for advice on various matters, and act as a bridge between new recruits and the support systems in place throughout the organisation.

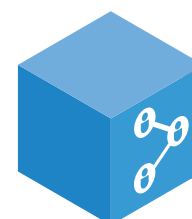
This allows employees to quickly get into the flow of collaborative work, and to build relationships with key stakeholders. When new ideas and innovations are introduced, this social capital helps to lubricate the process of getting buy-in and support from various departments.



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Instead of seeing themselves as a supplier of medical products, J&J acts as consultants, looking at providing holistic solutions that can serve the unmet needs of their clients. As Lillian Shieh, Head of Design, J&J Asia Pacific, says, *"We try to look holistically at what it is that might be needed in addition to a device. We are thinking about how that device is used in surgeries, and how do we ensure that hospitals have what they need to prepare for the surgery alongside other devices, and even during the surgery and after."*

This holistic approach is made possible by partnering with doctors, surgeons, nurses and administrators. Constantly building relationships with the healthcare professionals that use J&J's products or services allows the company to get a better understanding of how their products are actually being used, and what their users' needs are. *"We are trying to help them understand what they need to deliver better patient outcomes. But that is an evolving process, because medicine evolves so quickly,"* says Ms Shieh.



This principle is featured in **Aleph Labs'** Case Study on page 118 of this playbook.

Recommendations



A

- When staff give feedback, listen and seek to understand their point of view before responding.
- Model vulnerability by making it clear you do not have all the answers and apologising when necessary.
- Show genuine interest in staff input by probing for more in-depth answers.



B

- Evaluate if staff feedback channels to senior leaders are being used actively and effectively.
- Seek to understand why some feedback channels are more popular than others, e.g. interview staff.
- Maintain trust in these channels by ensuring confidentiality.



C

- Be willing to engage with leaders through various feedback channels.
- Be honest in voicing your work realities, giving feedback and suggestions on improvements.
- Share your perspectives about your users' needs, even if they are different from others.

PRINCIPLE 8

Make it safe to be honest with leaders

PRINCIPLE 9

Invite input and respond actively

A

- In decision-making, gather perspectives from affected stakeholders and incorporate their feedback before finalising the decision.
- Be coach-like, listen from their point of view and ask more questions before sharing your views.
- Following up on feedback creates credibility that feedback is taken seriously, and that encourages staff to continue giving more honest feedback.

B

- Consider dynamics of the relationship when matching mentors to staff to support staff in their development.
- Involve staff early to get inputs for organisation-wide decisions, instead of cascading what has been decided.
- To distil insights from surveys and develop action steps, actively partner department leaders to engage staff in smaller groups to understand their realities.

C

- Look out for opportunities to give feedback to help the organisation improve on how it serves its stakeholders.
- Show appreciation to leaders for listening to and acting on feedback.
- Seek out leaders who are open to feedback to share your ideas.

PRINCIPLE 10

Socialise design through conversations and relationships

A

- Set aside time to regularly have personal conversations with stakeholders to understand their needs at work as well as on the personal front.
- Be authentic about your struggles at work where appropriate, so others can identify and relate.
- Be consistent and genuine in caring for staff so that they know you do not have hidden agendas.

B

- Support leaders in engaging staff through scheduling of staff conversations.
- Create platforms for staff to interact with external stakeholders and partners beyond work meetings to develop relationships for mutual learning and understanding.
- Design employee engagements that genuinely develop deeper social bonds and improve working team dynamics beyond superficial team bonding activities.

C

- Be honest about current work realities to help leaders understand the support you need to help you do your job better.
- Build relationships with colleagues and stakeholders to deepen trust and accelerate the implementation of design.
- Take initiative to share insights on the needs of external stakeholders with your leaders and colleagues.

4

DESIGN AS IDENTITY

Design-led organisations deliberately craft their identity by incorporating design into their vision, mission and values, processes and practices. The focus on users is not limited to just one department, but infused throughout the organisation. Everyone in the organisation is expected to understand their impact on the entire business ecosystem, and the context of users across the value chain. Design then becomes not just something that they do, but part of who they are.

The principles covered in this chapter are:

11. Embed Design in Your Values and People Practices
12. Make User Centricity Part of Your Core Identity
13. Holistically Serve the Ecosystem of Users
14. Systematically Advocate the Voice of the User

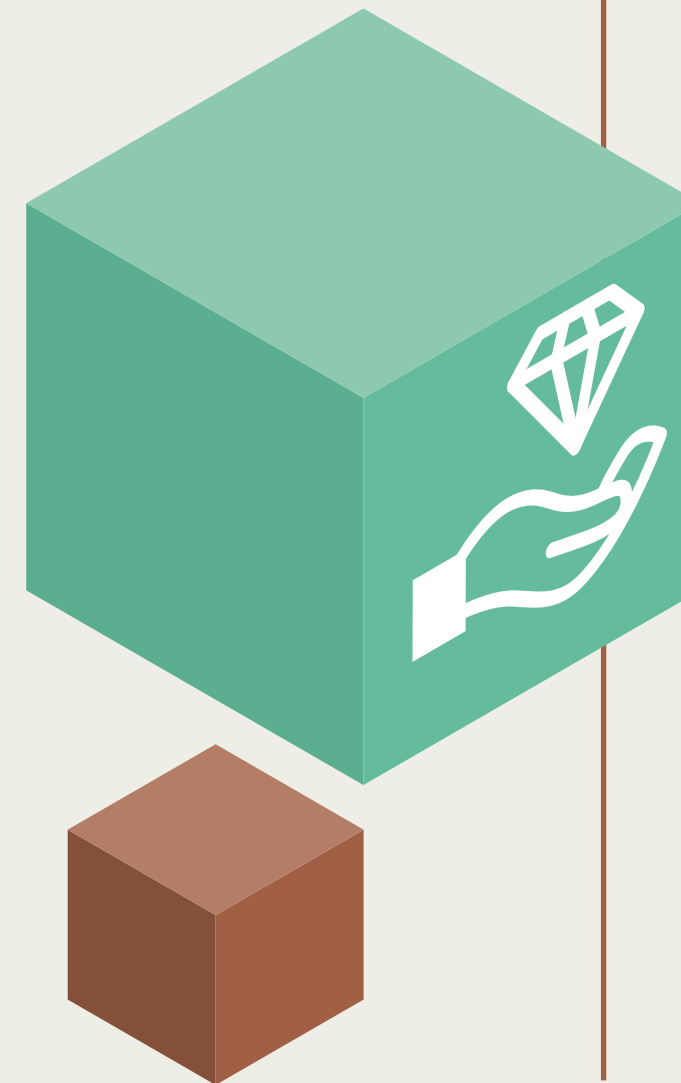
PRINCIPLE 11

Embed Design in Your Values and People Practices

Make organisational and people decisions based on design values.

Making design part of your organisation's identity means that design needs to be reflected in the decisions that the organisation makes. Whether business decisions or personnel decisions, design needs to be central to the organisation's decision-making process.

This is most obvious when design is written into an organisation's values, which are the bedrock of every decision made. Many organisations we spoke with talked about hiring based on these values, but for some, these values are also integral to the promotion and performance appraisal process. Other organisations use these values as a metric to measure their success as a business.





Grab's values are expressed as the 4Hs of "Heart", "Humility", "Hunger" and "Honour". "Heart" is having empathy for their users, stemming from a desire to do better for the communities that Grab serves. "Humility" is knowing that they do not have all the answers and they need to continuously seek feedback from their users. "Hunger" is the resilience to learn from mistakes, and to continue learning and improving despite setbacks. "Honour" is about building and maintaining trust with their users through integrity and ethics. These 4Hs guide the work that they do and are built into their people processes.

Cornelius Chang, Head of People and Organisational Development at Grab, elaborated on how the 4Hs were built into the hiring process and that cultural fit is a key part of the assessment. Grab's People Team developed a culture interview guide that incorporates the 4Hs. *"We have a very robust interview guide across the 4Hs with positive indicators, negative indicators, questions to ask and what to look out for,"* shared Mr Chang. This interview guide contains questions that are designed to reveal a candidate's thought process and personal decision-making metrics through hypothetical situations and examples from the candidate's experience. This is then measured against the 4Hs to see how much Grab's values resonate with the candidate's personal values.

The sequence of interviews was then redesigned to put the culture interview first, to better reflect its importance in the recruitment process.

On top of that, the interview process was redesigned. Grab's interview process typically consists of two to five rounds of interviews, and the culture interview used to be the last round. Grab's People Team realised that this puts the culture interviewer in a difficult position of having to reject someone after various other managers have approved of their technical skills and capabilities, especially for borderline cases.

The sequence of interviews was then redesigned to put the culture interview first, to better reflect its importance in the recruitment process. *"We believe that if we're shortlisting you for an interview, you'd likely have some of the skills and experiences, so let's first look into whether or not you're the right cultural fit for Grab. And if you are, then let's proceed to explore more about the role fit,"* Mr Chang explained.



When a meeting
is called to
brainstorm ideas
and solutions,
everyone has
the right to
speak and give
opinions.



HOPE Technik's 10 Rules of Engagement encompass the organisation's belief in the ideation process, the importance of asking questions and unconditional respect to all stakeholders. These rules of engagement are reflected in the organisation's structure and how they engage with their staff.

Peter Ho, CEO of HOPE Technik, believes that part of enabling employees to adopt these values is to have a system that allows for flexible collaboration, mutual respect and open communication. For HOPE Technik, this translates into a flat structure that emphasises equality of ideas over rigid organisational hierarchy. *"Not a single person in the office has a room. Everyone is on a first-name basis, everyone wears the same company polo shirt to work. There is no segregation in the pantry, like management sits here or whatever,"* Mr Ho said.

He explained that this allows for more candour, saying, *"When everyone talks to you directly every day, the barrier is gone, and they are not so careful with what they say. They are more candid in sharing new ideas or perspectives. You can find out the truth about some*

things and avoid getting sugar-coated opinions. As leaders, we avoid only listening to what and who we want to listen to."

Holden Ngoh, HOPE Technik's People and Culture Manager, shared that this principle is also reflected in their meetings and projects. When a meeting is called to brainstorm ideas and solutions, everyone has the right to speak and give opinions. *"Whether you're the CTO, team lead, or an intern, everyone's ideas are valid. Even a trainee who just joined us for less than one week; we accepted his ideas and implemented it to see how it works,"* said Mr Ngoh. He shared that having such structures and practices in engaging employees enable them to participate in design, embedding it further in the organisation's culture.

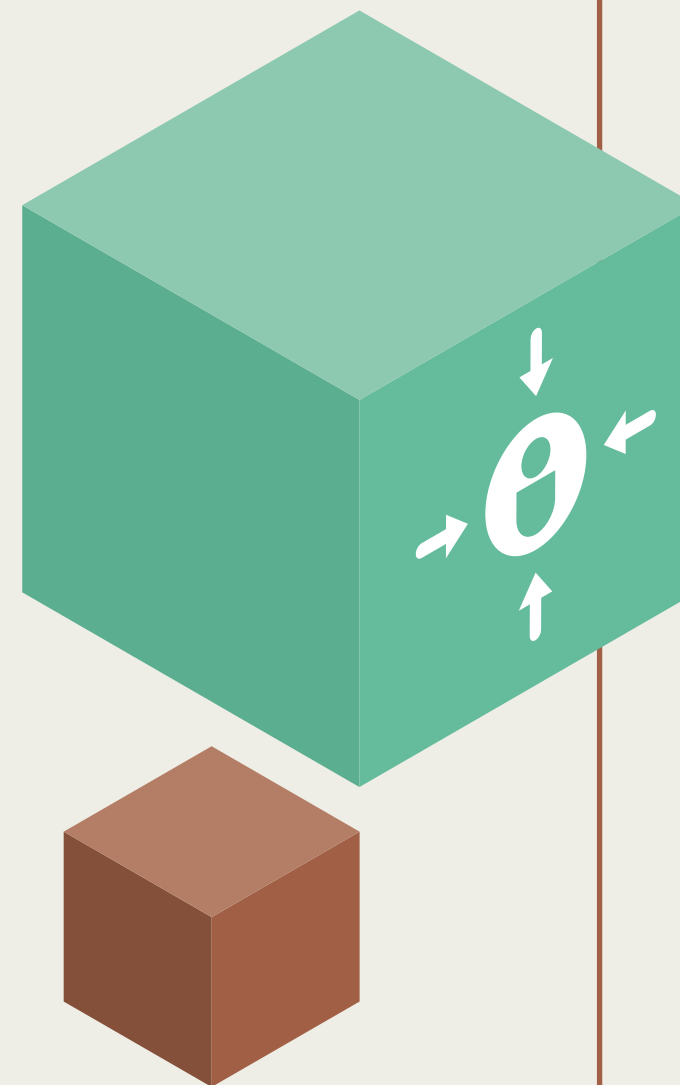


This principle is featured in **HOPE Technik** and **Johnson & Johnson's** Case Studies on **page 138** and **page 146** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 12

Make User Centricity Part of Your Core Identity

Ensure that user centricity is embraced by all in the organisation, not just the designers.



Design-led organisations place user needs at the centre of everything they do, from their customer-facing activities to their internal processes. Hence, design cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of designers, and needs to be understood and embraced by everyone in the organisation.

This means that having design as part of an organisation's identity requires various functions, even finance or human resources, to have practices that place users first. Everyone in the organisation needs to understand what user centricity means and know how to apply it in their own work processes. Some organisations have policies to include everyone in the design process, or run training programmes and workshops that equip everyone with the knowledge and tools to apply design in their work.

PHILIPS

At Philips, the design team conducts “Cocreate”, their specially curated approach to user-centric innovation. The Cocreate approach consists of workshops and projects where the design team partners with various stakeholders in the organisation to guide them through the design thinking process. The participants are taken through a methodology that emphasises empathy for the users, continuous iteration and agility. They are also taught to use design thinking tools and are partnered with design experts to create innovative solutions. This approach helps to facilitate design within the organisation, harnessing interdisciplinary teams to collaborate and create solutions together with users.

CEO of Philips Singapore and Head of Finance for Philips ASEAN Pacific, Ivy Lai, strongly advocates the importance of running Cocreate within the various departments in Philips, saying, *“Design is not for the privileged few who are in contact with customers like the sales team, it’s for everybody.”*

In order for everyone in the organisation to adopt design, Ms Lai believed that it was important that they get to experience the design process first-hand. She got the design team to run Cocreate workshops with all the various departments, from finance to IT. *“Once people participate in Cocreate, they will see the value of design. The power of promotion by word of mouth is far more valuable than emailing everybody to use design thinking,”* shared Ms Lai.

The participants
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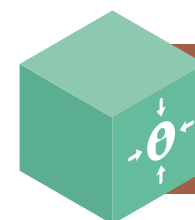
Mandai WILDLIFE GROUP

By providing these
opportunities and
platforms for staff to
experience design,
the Group hopes
to help staff to see
the value of design
and internalise user
centricity as they go
about their daily work.

Mandai Wildlife Group (‘the Group’) provides several platforms and opportunities for staff to be involved in design, specifically to look out for and meet users’ needs. They believe that if staff experience the process of design on their own, they will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of it and apply it in their daily work.

The Group encourages their staff to participate in ground-up initiatives, where staff can look at their own departmental processes and propose changes that will improve customer experience or workflow for their colleagues. They call this business-as-usual optimisation. Staff can also join the “Mandai Insights Circle” to test new experiences and give their authentic feedback from the users’ perspectives. This is an open invitation for all staff, regardless of their job roles, to be involved in cross-functional projects and to participate in co-creating innovative solutions.

Staff can also volunteer to be involved in “transformation projects” like the reimagining of food and beverage services in the zoo to better cater to the needs of users. These projects are macro level projects that involve several departments, from operations to sales and marketing. These larger scale projects have targeted outcomes that seek to improve the user experience, and staff are encouraged to be involved in them. This provides staff with a chance to gain exposure to the rest of the work at the zoo, and more importantly, to gain a better understanding of how design can be applied to different parts of the zoo’s operations. By providing these opportunities and platforms for staff to experience design, the Group hopes to help staff to see the value of design and internalise user centricity as they go about their daily work.



This principle is featured in the **Changi Airport Group’s** Case Study on page 126 of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 13

Holistically Serve the Ecosystem of Users

Understand the context of users across the value chain to best serve their needs.

This principle encompasses two key areas. “Holistically serve” means meeting the needs of the users, and looking beyond just the point of sale to understand how the customer might be using the product, their cultural context and their latent needs. Some organisations approach this by looking at the entire journey that a user takes before arriving at the point of transaction, to see how the company can add value to the whole journey.

The other key part of this principle is defining the “ecosystem of users”. A company’s users include every person that interacts with the organisation, both internal and external. The entire ecosystem of users needs to be considered, with every interaction designed intentionally. In doing so, organisations reinforce design as part of their core identity, present in everything that they do.



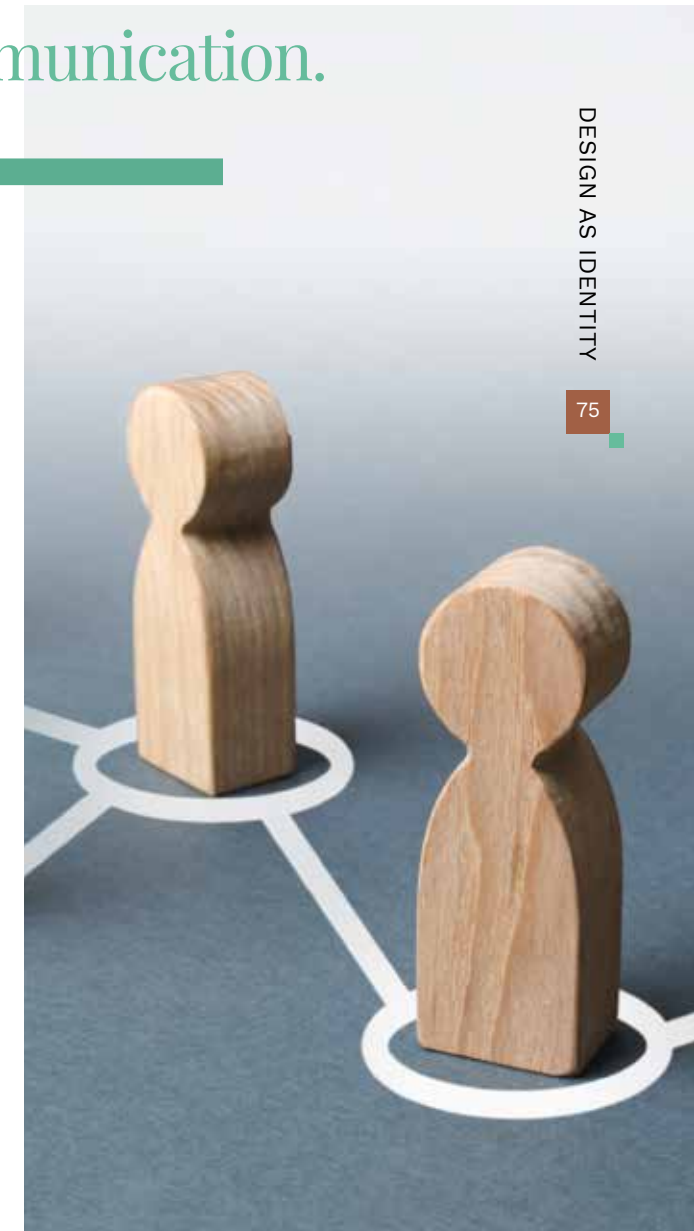
SaladStop!’s motto “Eat Wide Awake” goes beyond promoting a healthy diet. According to Co-Founder, Adrien Desbaillets, SaladStop! curates the entire ecosystem of their business – the source, the ingredients, the nutritional benefits, the customers, the farmers and the employees needed to bring them together. *“It is about looking at every part of the process, from the seed all the way to when it ends up in your salad bowl,”* Mr Desbaillets said.

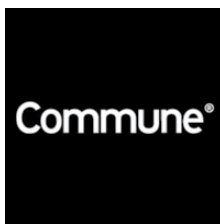
This approach impacts their interaction with their customers. SaladStop! understands that building emotional connections with their customers requires thorough and transparent communication. Customers want to know everything about their food, including its source, its nutritional value and how it was grown. To do this, they work closely with their farmers and suppliers to understand where their products come from, whether they are sustainably grown and properly certified. They then partner with these suppliers to incentivise them to adopt organic and sustainable practices.

SaladStop! does not just look at the needs of their end consumers. They also look at how they can better serve their suppliers and the community at large. In Singapore, where only a tiny fraction of produce is locally grown, SaladStop! has worked with local hydroponic farms since their early days.

Their current supplier of kale chips in Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines was a street vendor that they met at a farmers’ market, whose business they helped to grow. With their support, she is even starting to get these kale chips stocked in supermarkets. They have also launched the SaladStop! Marketplace as a platform for small producers to share their products, thereby helping their suppliers expand their businesses.

SaladStop! understands that building emotional connections with their customers requires thorough and transparent communication.





At Commune and Koda, holistically serving clients involves understanding how they will use the products and who will be using them. When designing their furniture, Commune and Koda conduct in-depth market research to understand each country's lifestyle trends. They also look into how the furniture is being used in their customers' homes, understanding that in countries where multigenerational households are the norm, the buyer may not be the one using it. All this information provides them with greater context of their customers, and informs every part of their design process, from the look and feel of each piece of furniture to the materials they use.

Commune also pays close attention to their users' experience with them. That means seamlessly weaving together the online and offline experience, so that when customers walk into the stores, their sales staff are able to pull up the customer's online favourites to serve them better. They have also installed augmented reality applications to help customers to virtually manipulate and place furniture around their houses.

Commune also pays close attention to their users' experience with them.



This principle is featured in **iHub Solutions'** Case Study on **page 142** of this playbook.

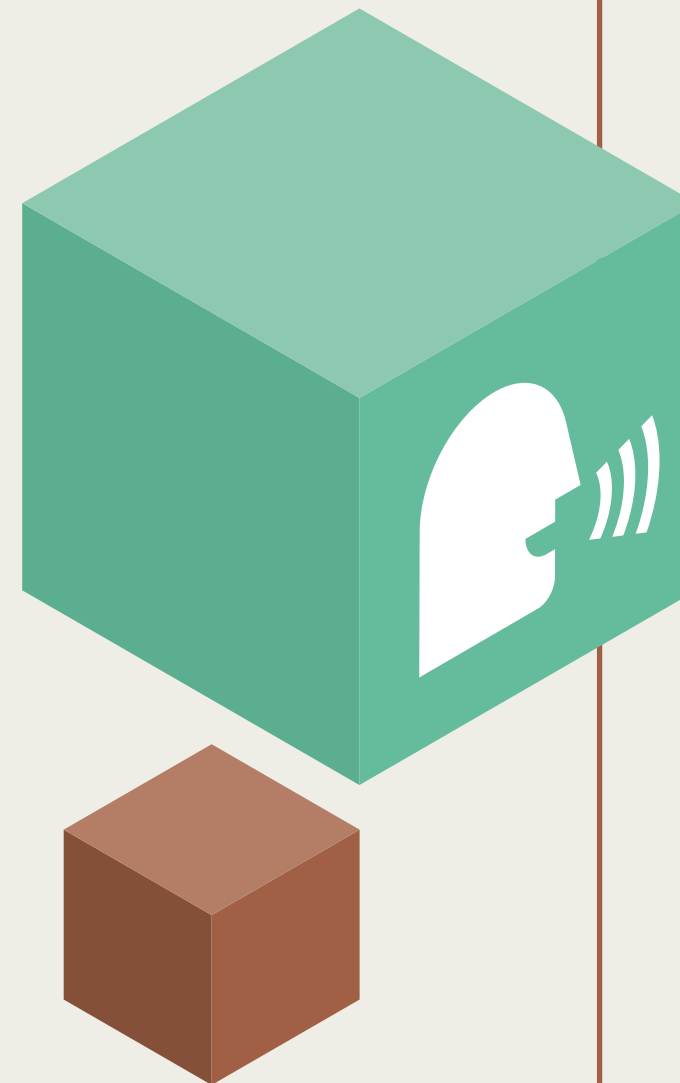
PRINCIPLE 14

Systematically Advocate the Voice of the User

Put processes in place to ensure that the user is consistently represented in discussions and decision-making.

An organisation that is design-led must have the user's voice represented in every part of the business. This helps to incorporate design into every system and process, and embeds it within the organisation's culture.

This goes beyond just user testing or asking for feedback. Rather, systems need to be put in place to ensure that the user's voice is continually part of the conversation and remains top-of-mind. This means building structures that support the collection, analysis and incorporation of user data, not only in the process of designing products and services, but also in daily operations and decision-making.





“The key thing is not really about titles... everyone should wear the user focus hat, and encourage and commend people who wear the hat.” – Marcus Tan, Co-Founder of Carousell

User experience is a key factor in Carousell’s product designs. To ensure that user centricity is embedded throughout the organisation, Carousell has implemented structures and systems that help to keep the organisation focused on the users.

Carousell has a Marketplace Experience Team that collects and analyses user data. The team reviews the user interaction chain, and looks at information like sales volumes and the number of new chats and listings. They analyse each part of the user’s journey to identify areas where the highest dropout occurs, so that they can improve. The team also works on the segmentation of categories, user profiles and personas, and monitors user feedback channels. This information is then shared with other teams like the product design team, so that it can be integrated into the development process.

A unique role within this Marketplace Experience Team is one who is literally called “User’s Voice”. “User’s Voice” acts as the user’s representative in Carousell. Amalgamating the information collected by the team, the “User’s Voice” sits in all marketing, product and commercial meetings to ensure that users’ needs are always being considered.

User experience is a key factor in Carousell’s product designs.



INLAND REVENUE
AUTHORITY
OF SINGAPORE

Collaborating with users and co-creating with them became a strategic priority for the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore (IRAS) during their organisation-wide design transformation exercise in 2016. As part of this process, users were not just asked for feedback post-launch but were included in every stage of product development.

When IRAS looked to design a tax introduction process for new business owners, they engaged with over 200 stakeholders to discover key pain points for small businesses, and to co-create the tax journey with them. While developing their solution, 20 new business owners were involved in their usability testing, with their feedback shaping the improvements required for the next iteration. And after launching this programme, they continue to solicit and incorporate user feedback through their e-service rating system.

As part of this drive to include users in their processes, IRAS also built a specialised User Experience pod, for their development teams to observe how users interact with their products. They also conduct Tax Hackathons involving over 70 partners and stakeholders to drive ideation for some of their more challenging tax issues. The ideas are then supported with grants and other resources, allowing these partners to fully own and operate their products, and increase co-ownership.

And after launching this programme, they continue to solicit and incorporate user feedback through their e-service rating system.



*This principle is featured in the **National Library Board’s** Case Study on **page 150** of this playbook.*

Recommendations

PRINCIPLE 11

Embed design in your values and people practices

- Be leaders whom staff can approach for brainstorming and experimenting of ideas and not just a manager that delegates tasks.
- Hold every single person in the company to the same standards in terms of values and culture, without exception, and take action for non-compliance.
- Respect every person's perspective regardless of their rank, seniority or expertise.

- Embed user-centric values into the recruitment and performance appraisal system.
- Take firm action when staff or leaders show misalignment with the values.
- Design and structure the onboarding process to help new staff fully understand and embrace the organisational values and vision.

- Identify how the values of the organisation resonate with you.
- Determine how the core values can be applied to your day-to-day work and decision-making process.
- Encourage your peers to reference the values of the organisation in decision-making.

PRINCIPLE 12

Make user centricity part of your core identity

- Seek to understand the value of design for your department and actively engage in design initiatives.
- Adopt the mentality that having a deep understanding of users is a core competency, not just an activity.
- Create platforms for staff to participate in user-centric discussions and innovation projects.

- Utilise training and consultants to equip employees with user-centric mindsets and skills.
- Support the non-design functions in embracing design in their work. Some ways include getting a designer to conduct co-creation sessions for internal departments, and placing designers or Design Champions in every department/team.
- Create innovation projects that staff can voluntarily participate in.

- Think about how to apply user centricity (internal and external) even if you are not customer-facing.
- Chart internal and external customer journeys to minimise pain points.
- Take part in innovation/improvement initiatives.

PRINCIPLE 13

Holistically serve the ecosystem of users

- Understand the full range of needs from users, be it upstream or downstream.
- Look within the ecosystem for ways to create value beyond your immediate user or client.
- When developing solutions, review their impact on the entire ecosystem rather than just one user.

- Immerse staff in the user experience as part of the onboarding process, to better understand the context of the users, e.g. staff going out for delivery etc.
- Create opportunities for employee engagement with different users, such as vendors, suppliers or different communities of end users, e.g. inviting them to your office.
- Organise regular sessions to socialise staff on the impact their work has on the communities the business engages with, beyond their specific job functions.

- Find opportunities to improve the end user experience by involving and co-creating solutions with your stakeholders.
- Examine who your stakeholders are – upstream and downstream – that are impacted by your work, and their pressing needs.
- Identify areas within your control that can be refined to better serve the users' needs.

PRINCIPLE 14

Systematically advocate the voice of the user

- Establish processes that include users in the various stages of design of products and services.
- Measure user feedback as it is an indicator of the organisation's performance.
- Ensure that the user's voice is represented at the leadership table.

- Incorporate staff's understanding of user centricity as a means to assess job fit and as part of promotion and appraisal criteria.
- Establish a dedicated team to look into user data and champion the voice of the user in meetings.
- Allow opportunities for staff to engage with your community of users, not just for work but also on a personal level.

- Identify what user centricity means for your role (internal and external stakeholders) and scope of work.
- Actively seek feedback from users and improve on meeting users' needs better.
- Take ownership in representing the users' interests and not just leaving it to designers.

5

ADOPTION OF DESIGN

Organisations with design at the heart of their culture seek to enable everyone in the organisation to participate in design. This means installing structures and systems that support ground-up innovation, and providing employees space to experiment and iterate. Policies are developed such that design is experienced by the employees, and user centricity is infused throughout various operational processes.

The principles covered in this chapter are:

15. Make Design Simple for Everyone to Use
16. Use Design Internally, Not Just Externally
17. Empower Employees with Autonomy to Meet Users' Needs
18. Reinforce Design Through Employee Development and Engagement Rituals

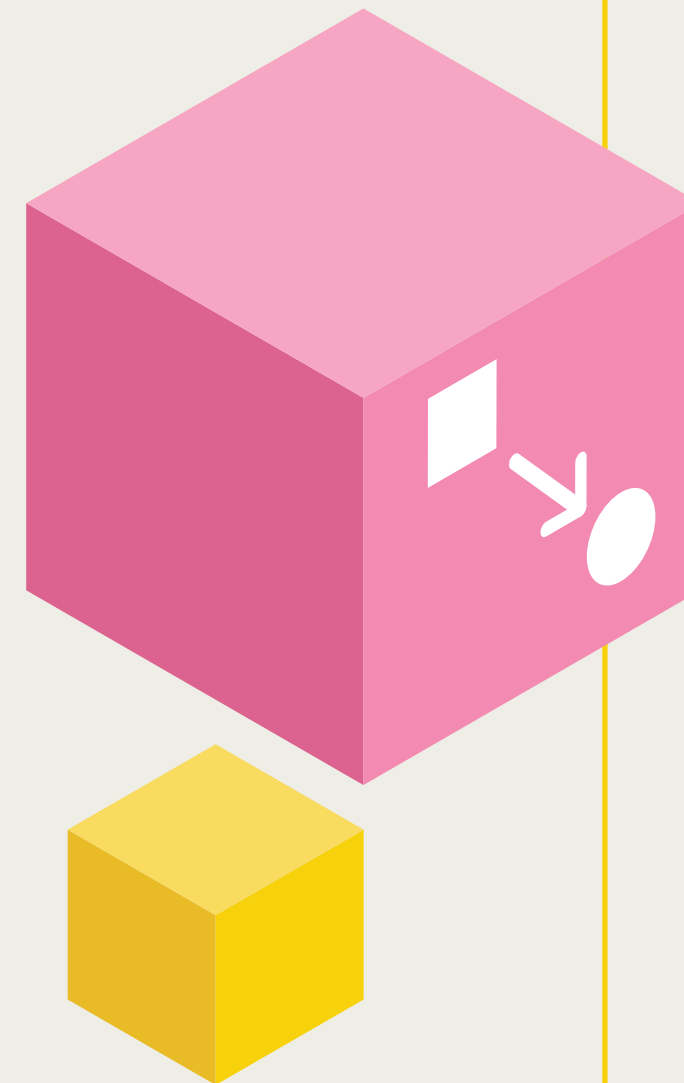
PRINCIPLE 15

Make Design Simple for Everyone to Use

Ensure that design resources are easily accessed and simplify design into concrete steps or behaviours.

To smoothen the process of design adoption in an organisation, it is important to remove any structural barriers that are counterproductive to design. With design often deemed to be an abstract concept, organisations must invest time and effort to ensure that staff can easily understand design.

Design-led organisations do this by codifying design into a set of behaviours, values or actions that their staff can take, then ensuring that the resources required to take these actions are easily accessible. Any potential psychological barriers should be removed too. Some organisations also create simple handles for staff to recall these design actions in their daily work, making design more easily understood.



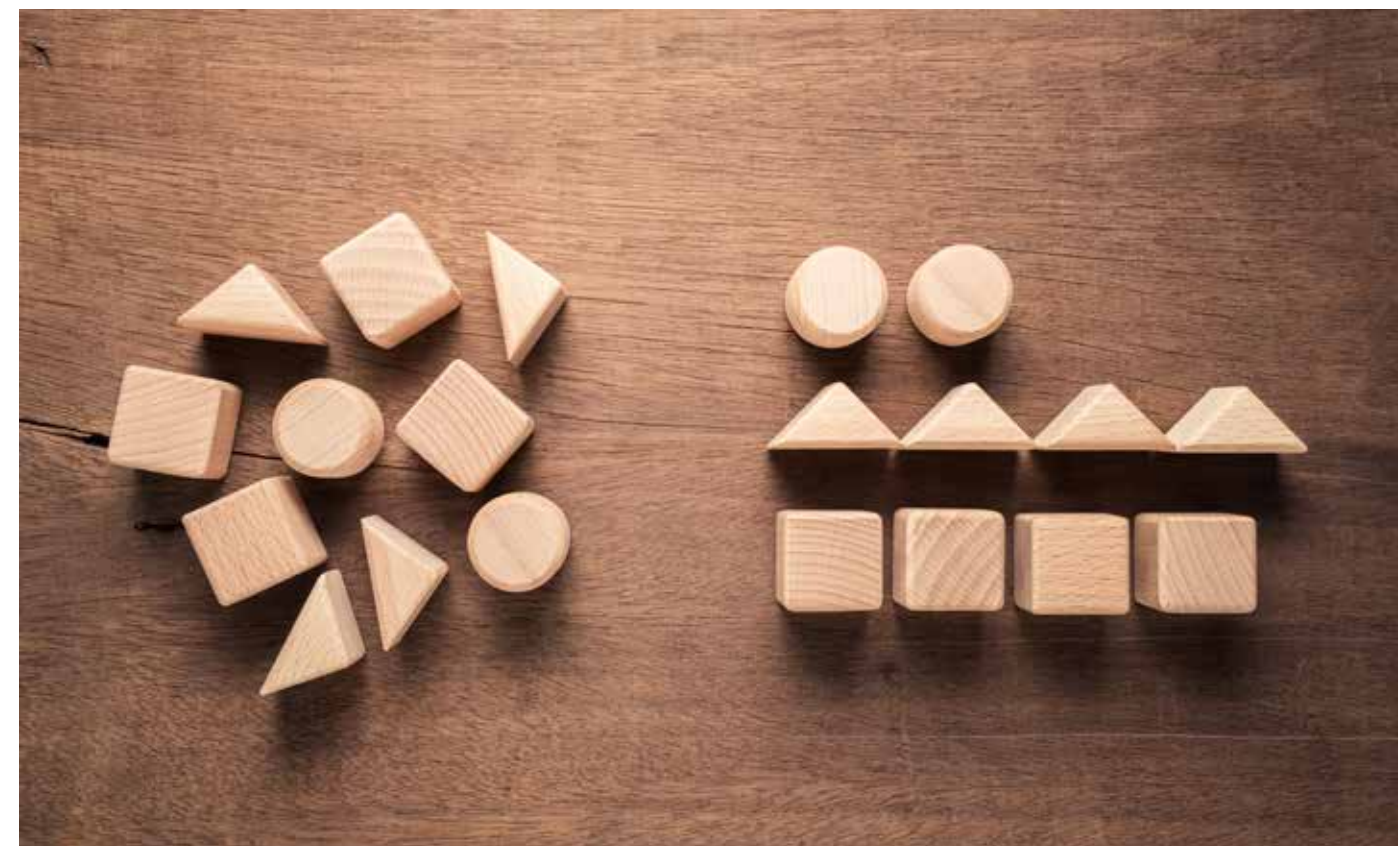
Mandai

WILDLIFE GROUP

Mandai Wildlife Group ('the Group') employs staff from many different backgrounds and profiles. To make it easy for all staff to adopt design, they have made it a point to avoid jargon and simplify its communication so that design can be cascaded smoothly to all levels of the organisation. *"We made it very simple. We don't even talk about design thinking or anything; to us, design thinking is an enabler,"* said Belina Lee, Group Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer & Head of Transformation Office, Mandai Wildlife Group.

To simplify the ideas of design and innovation, they set about demystifying and democratising the concept for staff. She shared that getting everyone in the organisation to be involved in design was the best way to achieve transformation, and this could only be done if everyone could understand and relate to design. *"The easiest way to help people understand that it's not some lofty thing was to make it relatable to them. Instead of taking 10 steps to get from point A to point B, you think of a way to reduce it. That's innovation in its simplest form,"* explained Ms Lee.

The easiest way to help people understand that it's not some lofty thing was to make it relatable to them.



The desired actions that staff can take to be more design-led were also simplified into five behavioural traits: user-focused, data-driven, optimisation, experimental and agile. These five traits act as a simple guide for staff during meetings, and are cues that help to shape their decision-making. *"It's much easier to reference behaviour descriptors, because in everyday meetings, you can say, 'Hey, are we being data-driven?' or 'What do you know about the user? Have you been user-focused?'"* said Ms Lee, elaborating that these traits provide an easy way to remind staff of the principles of design.

The Group has also undergone a shift in the way they are structured, so there is only one touchpoint for staff who want to suggest an improvement. Previously, if someone wanted to propose a new digital solution, they needed to approach multiple departments, speak with different stakeholders, and repeatedly lobby for their ideas. All these departments have been brought under a single umbrella called the Transformation Office, to help optimise the process of innovation. *"In the past, it was this baton passing. Now it's a very nice product chain... We created a transformation project life cycle management framework,"* shared Ms Lee. Doing so makes initiating innovation projects less cumbersome for staff, and the Group believes that this is important to encourage engagement.



Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) started a Centre for Healthcare Innovation Living Lab (CHILL) to make it easy for their staff to solve patient care issues using design. CHILL is a dedicated space situated in the hospital compound where staff can walk in with an issue and get whatever help they need to create solutions, whether that is expert advice, guidance on the problem-solving process or even sourcing for materials to build prototypes.

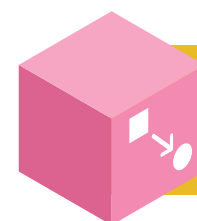
David Dhevarajulu, Executive Director, Centre for Healthcare Innovation at TTSH, shared one such issue that they had to deal with in the rehabilitation ward, which tended to have more elderly patients. These elderly patients would normally be accompanied by a caregiver, who would help to administer their medication and stay with them in case they needed help. However, the ward was not designed to accommodate this, and as a result, the caregivers had to cope with a very cramped space and made many requests to the nurses.

Having a one-stop shop for these innovation projects has led to a year-on-year increase in the number of staff coming forward with their ideas.

After being approached by one of these nurses, the team at CHILL started mapping out the user journey, interviewing patients and their caregivers, and studying the layout of the building. This research enabled them to start brainstorming ideas and solutions that could meet the needs of all the stakeholders involved. They came up with a three-in-one patient chair that could be converted into a bed for caregivers or a bench for visitors, while maximising the available space.



Projects like these are what CHILL was founded for, to make innovation and design easy for staff. Lynette Ong, Director of Transformation Office at TTSH, shared that having a one-stop shop for these innovation projects has led to a year-on-year increase in the number of staff coming forward with their ideas. *“In the past, when our staff wanted to innovate, they had to go through a laborious process of finding vendors to translate their ideas correctly and this can be a challenging process in terms of communicating technical requirements and managing a limited tinkering budget. Now with CHILL, we are able to curate and develop their ideas to meet users’ needs, create prototypes and conduct user testing to facilitate iteration and refinement prior to approaching vendors for fabrication,”* shared Ms Ong.



This principle is featured in the **Changi Airport Group** and **DBS’ Case Studies** on **page 126** and **page 130** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 16

Use Design Internally, Not Just Externally

Apply design to the employee experience, because what is experienced internally will reinforce what is created externally.

Design is not limited to the development of products and services for end consumers. Getting an entire organisation to adopt design becomes much easier when staff can see that their internal processes and policies are also created by design, and that their needs, as users, are being considered. When staff can personally reap the benefits of design, it helps to drive home its value and pave the way for better adoption.

Applying design to internal processes means taking the same user-centric approach in developing the employee experience. It requires the same commitment to speak to users, in this case the staff, to truly understand their latent needs. This also means constantly iterating and improving on the employee experience, finding ways to meet their needs, and developing solutions to make their work more enjoyable.



Founder and Managing Director of iHub Solutions (iHub), Koh San Joo, set out with a vision of a logistics company that his staff are proud of. To achieve this, he employs technology to identify potential gaps in his employees' work processes.

iHub's trucks are fitted with GPS, telematics, door sensors and temperature sensors, all easily trackable through one system. While it may sound dystopian, these tracking technologies were not meant for Mr Koh to monitor his staff, but for him to identify problem areas and make improvements to the system.

The system is meant to detect anomalies, which allows Mr Koh to investigate and understand the root of the problem. He speaks to his staff to understand the realities they face on the ground, and design better solutions that can meet their needs. For example, one of the policies he has is that trucks should not be left with their engines idling for more than 15 minutes. This is because idling engines are bad for the environment and the drivers, and damages the vehicle.

However, Mr Koh noticed that some drivers left their vehicle engines idling for over an hour. He spoke to these drivers to understand why they were doing this, and realised that their tight schedules meant they did not have time to sit down to have a proper lunch. As such, they would take away food and eat it in their trucks with the air conditioning turned on during hot days. This led Mr Koh to relook at the delivery scheduling to ensure his drivers could go somewhere else comfortable for lunch.

Mr Koh believes that it is important to invest in technology to make work easier. *"You must create an intelligent world. Do not make people do data entry, sort documents; these should ideally be done by machines,"* he said. As such, he has invested in what he calls "commoditised digital tools" to fully digitalise his accounting and document management systems, and empower his staff to take more ownership in terms of decision-making.

Mr Koh believes that it is important to invest in technology to make work easier.



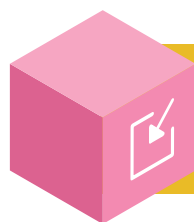
Committed to designing seamless and simple experiences for their customers, DBS crafts specific customer journey maps. However, these journey maps are applicable to their internal employees too.

In DBS, employee experience = customer experience. DBS understands that good employee journeys must occur in order to deliver a joyful customer experience. This is why DBS commits significant resources to understanding their employees' journeys, and individual journeys are crafted according to the different personas an employee goes through during his/her life cycle. To reduce manual workarounds and ensure seamless hand-offs from team to team, the employee journeys are mapped out and reviewed end-to-end to enable interoperability and cross-pollination across departments.

For instance, the HR team at DBS has two User Experience designers embedded within, to aid in the implementation of design internally. They view employees as their users, and apply to them the same principle of user-centric design that has earned them recognition as the best bank in the world. Other than mapping out their journeys, the team constantly improves these journeys, committing to improving a specific number each year. Lee Yan Hong, Head of HR, shared that *"Whatever it is, we will ask, 'Is this making the journey joyful for employees?' Conversely, we ask them which one is causing the most pain, then we go and deal with that issue."*

DBS also has a specialised team that designs solutions for their internal departments – the enterprise IT team – which tackles software and hardware issues faced by bank employees.

DBS understands
that good
employee journeys
must occur in
order to deliver a
joyful customer
experience.



This principle is featured in **Banyan Tree Group, DBS and iHub Solutions'** Case Studies on **page 122, page 130 and page 142** of this playbook.

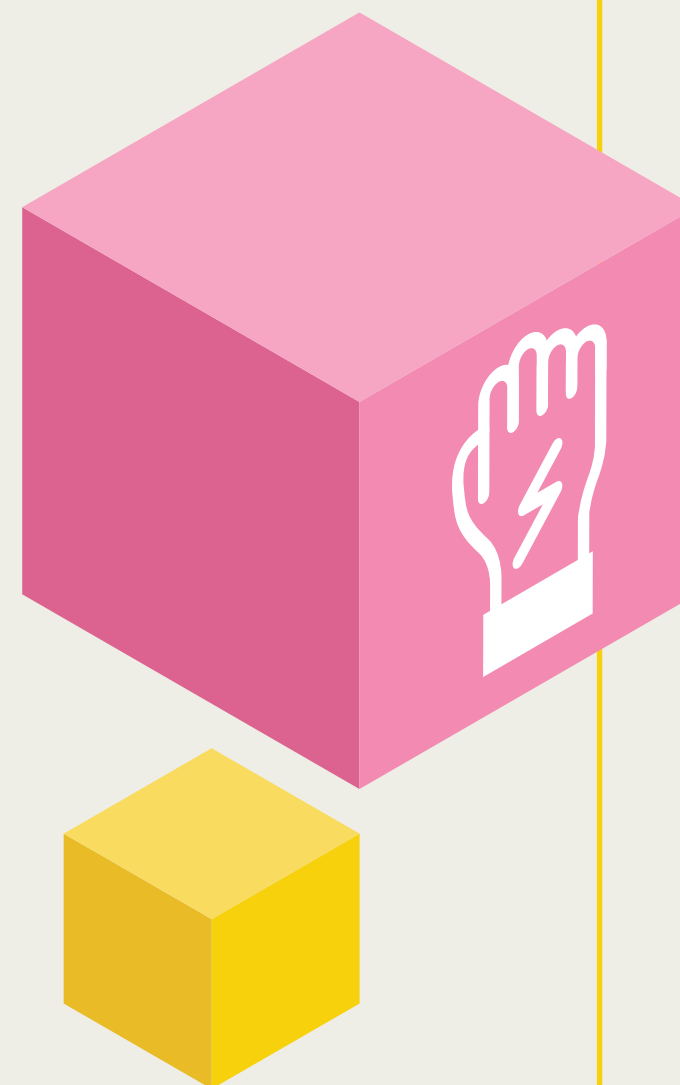
PRINCIPLE 17

Empower Employees with Autonomy to Meet Users' Needs

Within set goals and constraints, delegate decision-making authority to the lowest possible level to better meet stakeholders' needs.

As much as employees may want to be agile and user-centric, it would be difficult if they are not given the authority to utilise resources. Being responsive to and serving the immediate needs of users requires employees to make quick decisions. This does not mean that employees have carte blanche to do anything they like. Rather, there must be clear guidelines and set rules that allow employees to reasonably impact situations.

Such autonomy can be woven into work processes, so that employees need not go through lengthy approval processes for simple things. It can also be in small details like the ability to dictate their working environment or schedules. Empowerment can also mean allowing employees to take on or scrap entire projects. The caveat in all these forms of empowerment is that there needs to be a guiding principle, which is that decisions must be made in the best interest of the user.



H

Core to Huge's philosophy in design is to create the best possible outcomes for the company, the clients and most importantly, the users. Huge essentially allows their employees the ability to decide when and how work is presented.

Any employee who has worked at Huge for at least five years gets a unique gift – their own custom axe. The story behind this practice is that David Skokna, their first Creative Director, had brought an axe to office as a metaphor for his approach to work. *"He would review work and ask the team, 'Do you love it?'; and if the answer was not a resounding yes, then we would take a metaphorical axe to it and start again, regardless of where they were on the project,"* recalled Hugh Connelly, Executive Creative Director, Huge.



When we talk about outcomes, we're focused on genuinely making something meaningful, and that sometimes requires these daring, bold decisions.

This idea carries on to this day, and employees have the ability to axe a project and start over at any point if they feel that the project is unable to produce the best possible outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

Mr Connelly shared that he believes leaders need to help bridge the gap between staff and clients, to allow staff the space to have control of their work. He said, *"One of the hardest things is to call a client, and say, 'Hey, you know that review we're supposed to have tomorrow? We're not going to have it because we're not happy with the work yet.' They might be mad for a day or two, but all that's forgotten once we deliver something really great."*

These conversations serve to reassure clients that employees are working towards the best outcomes for the client and its users, rather than settle for something mediocre just because deadlines are looming. As Mr Connelly put it, *"When we talk about outcomes, we're focused on genuinely making something meaningful, and that sometimes requires these daring, bold decisions. That's the message to the team."* He explained that leaders actively supporting staff empowerment is especially important in the Singaporean context, since staff are generally more inclined to defer to their leaders out of respect.

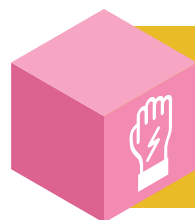


The National Library Board (NLB) operates 27 public libraries across Singapore. Recognising that each branch is uniquely different according to the communities they serve, NLB gives their branch managers and staff a high amount of ownership and autonomy to best serve their community.

These could be developing after-school programmes if the branch serves an area that has many nearby schools like the Geylang East Public Library, or more programmes for senior citizens if the branch is located in mature estates like the library@chinatown. Staff are also allowed to make autonomous decisions that can help their visitors feel more welcome. These decisions include everything from the branch layout to providing new amenities when they observe gaps in the user experience.

This level of autonomy allows staff to quickly respond to users' needs and improve their own processes. Kenneth Koh, Library Officer, NLB, shared his experience of how employees are empowered. He recalled a casual conversation with one of his colleagues who mentioned that it was difficult to track which tables had items left unattended for long periods of time. That simple statement sparked a quick discussion by the team members to brainstorm ideas, and they came up with a table labelling system. It was then put in place within two weeks. The whole process was initiated, conceptualised and implemented without involving the management team.

This level of
autonomy allows
staff to quickly
respond to
users' needs and
improve their
own processes.



This principle is featured in the **Government Technology Agency of Singapore, iHub Solutions** and the **National Library Board's Case Studies** on **page 134, page 142 and page 150** of this playbook.

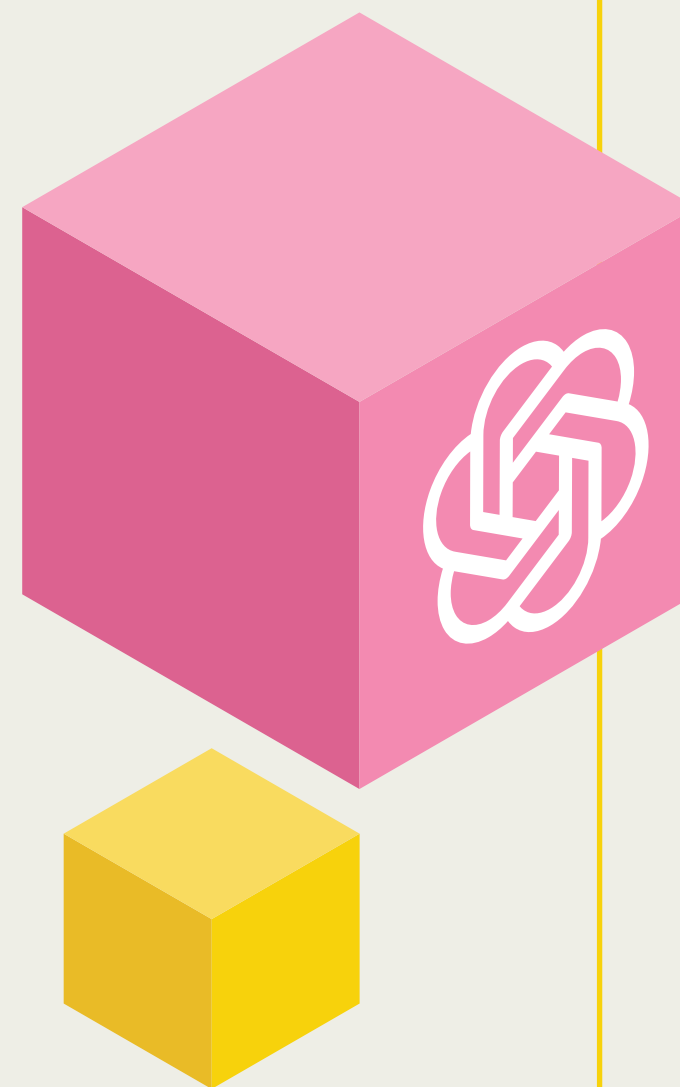
PRINCIPLE 18

Reinforce Design Through Employee Development and Engagement Rituals

Be consistent and intentional about reinforcing/including design at multiple employee touchpoints.

In order for design to be embedded in an organisation's culture, it is vital that it is not just mentioned in passing in annual meetings. Instead, an organisation must ensure that the values and behaviours of design are continually repeated and reinforced in every engagement with employees. Every interaction with employees is an opportunity to emphasise the importance of design behaviours, and the organisation needs to be intentional about curating these interactions.

For some organisations, this means having employee engagement sessions that allow the employees to interact with users, thereby increasing their empathy for users and reinforcing user centricity. For others, employee engagement sessions are designed to allow employees to ideate, discuss and learn, in a bid to improve collaboration and experimentation. Naturally, learning and development is also a way to directly influence the adoption of design, by incorporating these design elements into training and workshops for staff.





At Carousell, Co-Founder Marcus Tan believes in the importance of being intentional about infusing design through employee engagement. During Carousell's monthly town hall sessions, leaders will make it a point to share about Carousell's users. In fact, Carousell routinely invites their users to these town hall meetings to share their personal stories, which remind employees of the importance of user centricity.

Apart from these town hall sessions, Carousell also curates other opportunities for employees to interact with their users. Specific groups of users can be invited to give talks about how they use the app for various activities, such as real estate agents sharing their experience of listing properties on Carousell.

Sometimes, Carousell's community of users are even invited to the office for no particular agenda other than to interact with their staff. Mr Tan shared that they recently invited a group of board game sellers to the office. *"So, they're invited to play board games, not to talk but to play board games,"* he said. Such engagement rituals allow staff to build relationships and gain a deeper connection with their users. Employees also get to attend talks by engineers and developers who are invited to share about the latest developments in their space. These sessions ensure that design is constantly reiterated to all employees.

Such engagement rituals allow staff to build relationships and gain a deeper connection with their users.

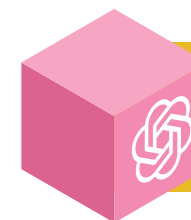


The National Library Board's (NLB) Assistant Chief Executive, Catherine Lau, runs a weekly programme called "the huddle" to encourage staff to participate in the process of design. At these working sessions, staff are asked to pitch ideas on programmes or improvements that can benefit various communities. Ms Lau and her team of directors who helm these meetings then give their perspectives on how the ideas can be refined and improved.

These ideas are given support and resources, and staff are in charge of managing these resources, assembling teams and iterating on their ideas. Going back and forth between ideation, feedback and refinement allows for a collaborative process to develop programmes that can meet users' needs. Such programmes are eventually prototyped and launched, and Ms Lau shared that over 100 projects are implemented every year.

Through these huddles, staff experience first-hand the process of experimentation, innovation and iteration. By continually engaging in these initiatives, Ms Lau hopes to encourage staff to become more familiar with the concept of planning and design, and apply it in their daily work.

Through these huddles, staff experience first-hand the process of experimentation, innovation and iteration.



This principle is featured in **Aleph Labs** and **Banyan Tree Group's** Case Studies on **page 118** and **page 122** of this playbook.

Recommendations

PRINCIPLE 15

Make design simple for everyone to use

- Employ simple language and mnemonics to help staff to understand desired design behaviours and the purpose of these expectations.
- Make it easy to access resources for innovation and experimentation, with checkpoints and milestones to resource priority projects.
- Break down design or innovation into simple behaviours, terms and steps that staff can easily adopt.

- Implement design competencies that are easy to understand and are day-to-day observable behaviours.
- Create simple behavioural cues and reminders such as acronyms that help to propagate design.
- Create platforms where staff can share ideas and best practices.

- Utilise available resources for improvement projects.
- Look for ways to improve your everyday workflow and interactions.
- Share ideas and innovations that your team has implemented with the rest of your colleagues.

PRINCIPLE 16

Use design internally, not just externally

- Apply the same methods of understanding and designing for external users to your internal users, i.e. employees.
- Continually engage with your staff to better understand their needs, what they value and how they can be at their best at work.
- Provide a holistic approach to caring for your staff's well-being and aspirations.

- Regularly connect with staff using metrics and data analysis to understand staff climate and ground realities.
- Consider employee experiences for all the internal processes, from hiring to onboarding to retiring.
- Continuously work on improving the overall staff experience in the organisation by focusing on their well-being, aspirations and internal processes.

- Apply design in your internal processes and interactions to make them more seamless and frictionless.
- Engage with your colleagues and leaders by giving honest feedback.
- Find opportunities to co-create the internal user experience with colleagues.

PRINCIPLE 17

Empower employees with autonomy to meet users' needs

- Trust that staff are the context experts in their areas, give them autonomy to make decisions that best serve their stakeholders, support them with resources, and help them to bridge the gap with clients.
- To empower decision-making, do not override the appointed decision-maker by giving instructions directly to staff.
- Define constraints and set goals, but allow staff and teams to determine how to get there.

- Hire people who are proactive and have the courage to try new things.
- Look for opportunities to amplify employees who have exercised autonomy in serving their stakeholders.
- Train staff in skill sets and mindsets required for greater ownership and empowerment.

- Instead of simply following the project brief, focus on creating the best possible outcome, for the organisation, your clients and most importantly, for the user.
- Exercise creativity and discretion amidst set guidelines and project constraints.
- For the benefit of your customers, have courage to make the decision, rather than wait for permission.

PRINCIPLE 18

Reinforce design through employee development and engagement rituals

- Schedule regular interactions with staff to reinforce design, e.g. mentoring, huddle.
- Be directly involved in training staff in key design skills, i.e. facilitate training or design processes.
- Be intentional in recognising and rewarding design-led behaviour in line with the organisation's values.

- Create employee engagement rituals to continually build and reinforce design.
- For greater sustainability, involve staff in the creation and development of engagement rituals so that they will look forward to attending them.
- Get key leaders to sponsor training or engagement rituals, and reinforce company values personally during those sessions.

- Be proactive to participate in staff engagement sessions and training.
- Give feedback on the engagement rituals – what works well and resonates, and what can be improved. Actively co-create/organise these rituals.
- Continually build design culture in day-to-day interactions with colleagues by sharing perspectives and experiences.

6

INNOVATION BY DESIGN

A large part of design includes experimentation, agility and iteration. To embed this in an organisation's culture, operational processes need to be intentionally designed to encourage fast and continuous testing. Additionally, organisations must embrace a future-focused mindset, not fixated on just immediate revenue and KPIs, but always keep ahead of the curve.

The principles covered in this chapter are:

19. Launch Quick, Fail Quick, Learn Quick
20. Synergise Diversity of Insights Within the Organisation
21. Be Patient with Ambiguity to Reap the Return on Investment (ROI) of Design
22. Adopt an Aggressive Attitude Towards Improvement

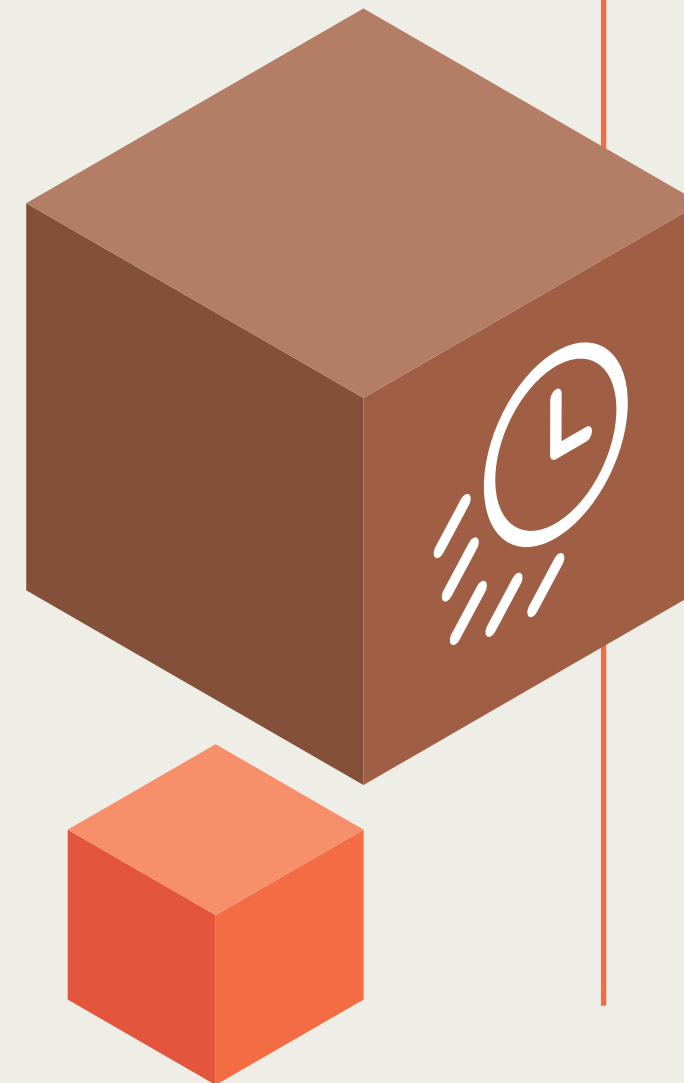
PRINCIPLE 19

Launch Quick, Fail Quick, Learn Quick

Launch at the earliest possible opportunity with the intention to learn from failure and solve for the right problems.

Rather than spending all your time perfecting something before the launch, design-led organisations create quick prototypes, keeping in mind that these might fail. It sounds counter-intuitive, but failure allows the organisation to quickly learn and make changes to their products and services, keeping the process flexible and agile.

Having structures and processes in place to fail quickly, coupled with leaders and staff who share the same mindset of learning from these failures, reinforces design in the journey of innovation.



Mandai WILDLIFE GROUP

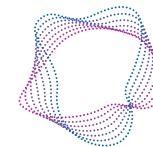
At the Mandai Wildlife Group ('the Group'), Belina Lee, Group Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer & Head of Transformation Office, encourages her staff to aim for imperfection. She believes that it is more important to test ideas quickly and learn from the negative feedback than to try to launch a perfect product from the start.

"The moment we say that we go in and we expect to always succeed, we're dead. Over the circuit breaker period, across various departments, we saw a lot of innovation, a lot of new ideas being tested. Some took off, some didn't. And I think that's okay. That's where you say, let's test and learn," said Ms Lee. Her teams are encouraged to launch prototypes that will only get a rating of two to three stars out of five for overall satisfaction from users, rather than try to aim for a five-star rating. This allows them to test and collect valuable user data quickly to make improvements.

The key to this development process is to garner negative feedback and to track future iterations to ensure that improvements are made. *"With feedback, you really want to zero in on the areas of learning or areas that people are not happy with. I don't want feedback to say, 'Wow, good job' or 'Well done'. I want feedback because I want to be better. I want to know what's not working so we can work on that,"* she shared. The team then solves some of the issues raised and launches the next iteration, repeating the process of testing, failing, collecting feedback and making incremental improvements. *"The first prototype was 2.8 stars in terms of overall satisfaction. Then the second iteration was 3.8, the third iteration was 4.2, then 4.5, then 4.8,"* said Ms Lee, explaining that this incremental approach helps to build that mentality of constant improvement and motivates staff to persevere.

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product from the start.

GOVTECH
SINGAPORE

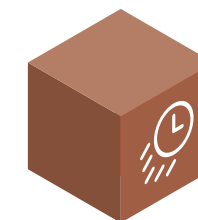


Government Technology Agency of Singapore's (GovTech) management team provides enough resources for their teams to create a minimum viable product (MVP). At regular checkpoints, these MVPs are tested and reviewed, and points for improvement are made.

The management team then allocates resources to the project for the teams to complete the next stage of iterations. This breaks the development process into a series of short cycles of launching, testing and iterating, allowing teams to learn and adjust quickly.

Formalising this process of checkpoints, that is tied to funding, forces their development teams to continually iterate and improve. This also allows GovTech to remain agile as there are natural points where they can make changes to a project's scope.

Formalising this process
of checkpoints, that is
tied to funding, forces
their development
teams to continually
iterate and improve.



This principle is featured in **HOPE Technik's** Case Study on **page 138** of this playbook.

PRINCIPLE 20

Synergise Diversity of Insights Within the Organisation

Gather perspectives from different departments and levels to create alignment and holistic solutions.

To aid in the adoption of design, everyone in the organisation needs to be able to contribute to the design process. Taking in a diversity of perspectives when designing solutions helps to ensure that staff feel included and valued. Additionally, diversity of insights helps in the development of more holistic solutions that take into account various perspectives of the users.

Creating this synergy within diversity is a fine balancing act. Staff must be encouraged to speak openly and be willing to lend their expertise or share information. However, when collaborating, it is equally important to ensure that the varied insights can be moulded into a coherent solution.



Combining experience and specialised skills across more than 40 industries, Accenture offers strategy and consulting, interactive, technology and operations services — all powered by the world's largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations Centres. Leveraging its global network of offices and operations in over 200 cities in 50 countries, seamless integration and collaboration have helped Accenture create for itself a differentiated and competitive advantage.

Accenture positions themselves as a one-stop solutions provider for their clients, able to manage a variety of consultancy projects from start to finish. What this means is that Accenture can develop the full suite of business transformation solutions without needing clients to approach four different companies. Teo Lay Lim, former Chairman of Accenture Singapore, likens it to providing a full dish rather than just core ingredients. *"If you think about it, these are the layers in a club sandwich. You've got ham, you've got a salad, you've got bread, and pickles."*

This is made possible with the integration of various business arms through regular rotations of their partners and the assembly of teams based on each client's journey. These collaborative set-ups allow Accenture to develop holistic solutions by adding each business' perspectives when executing the overall transformation journey.

Accenture applies this same principle to regional collaborations. Clients that have a presence in multiple countries, need not individually develop transformation journeys for each office, but instead, can rely on Accenture's extensive network to provide them with global solutions. *"Our differentiator is the ability to combine all these sets together because it adds value to the client. And so, client value creation is at the heart of this,"* says Ms Teo.

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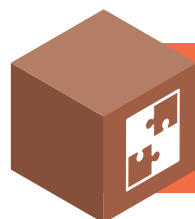


To better facilitate collaboration, Great Eastern utilises a structure that strikes a balance between moonshot ideas and organisational realities. Before a product is backed with resources and prototyped, it needs to meet three criteria. The three criteria are: customer validation, internal expert validation and technical validation. Projects which do not meet these criteria are placed on the slow track, where solutions tend to be more aspirational, but require further refinement.

This structure allows them to ensure that while diverse insights are valued, the company is not chasing down every single possibility. This also provides a flow to how ideas are brought forward, ensuring that various parts of the organisation are involved and have the opportunity to share their perspectives.

For example, when the design team at Great Eastern wanted to digitise the process of switching funds, they had to ensure it passed these criteria. They sought user input and feedback to provide evidence that this was something that would benefit the user. The second criterion of internal expert validation meant they had to seek their operations team's input, to review and assess the project and identify improvements that could be made. The last criterion of technical validation involved the risk and compliance team and the IT team, for their inputs on regulatory requirements and whether the existing framework could support this feature.

With this structure, Great Eastern provides a systematic way to collaborate and include other departments in every project. Collaboration is therefore less chaotic, and synergises multiple viewpoints into a coherent and functional project.



This principle is featured in the **Government Technology Agency of Singapore's** Case Study on **page 134** of this playbook.

This structure allows them to ensure that while diverse insights are valued, the company is not chasing down every single possibility.

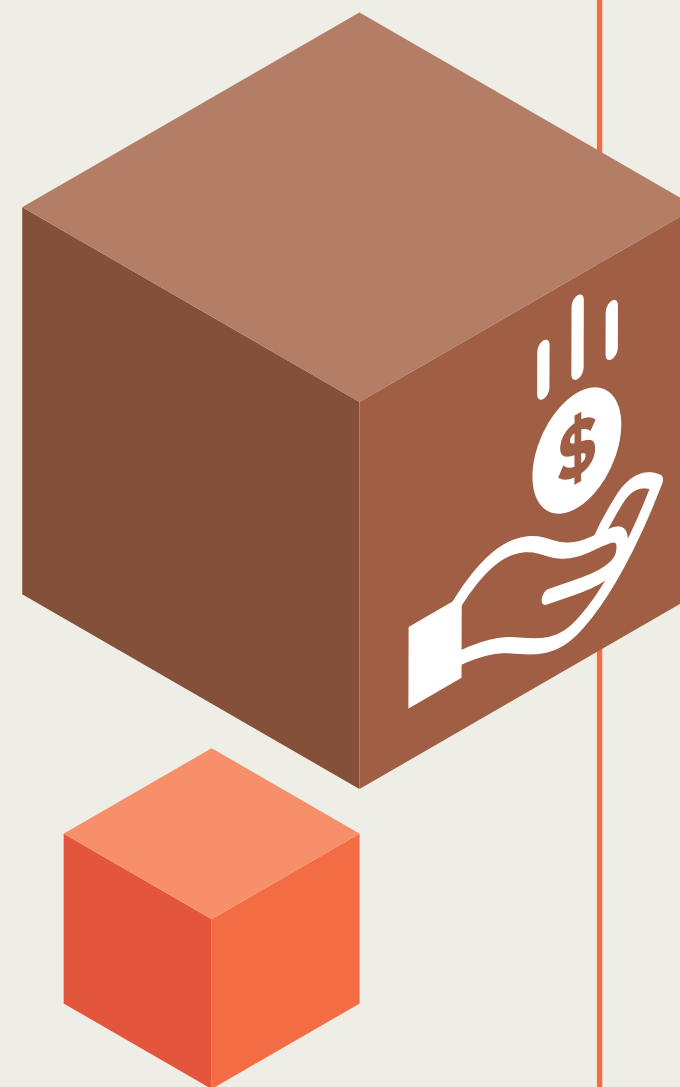
PRINCIPLE 21

Be Patient with Ambiguity to Reap the ROI of Design

Instead of settling for mediocre short-term gains, carve out areas for experimentation for exponential long-term results.

Innovation by design can often be a long and ambiguous process. If the organisation's focus is on trying to achieve immediate results, design may seem to be inappropriate. However, design enables organisations to solve the right problems, creating longer term value and results. Having the patience and trust in the process of design is critical for organisations to anticipate and meet future needs.

Many design-led organisations we spoke to shared that the balance between immediate profitability and longer term innovation is struck by carving out clear areas where failure and experimentation is encouraged, and where consistent excellence needs to be maintained. Organisations can then maintain their business as usual, while still looking into future solutions.





For Cityneon, having the patience to understand their users is key. *"What's always very important for me in the exploration phase of design thinking, is to really understand your guests and their needs, the ones that they are able to express. It's also important to capture the latent needs that the guests and the stakeholders are not able to express, but that we will uncover through our process of exchange, of interviewing, asking questions, and trying to understand the context,"* said Welby Altidor, Chief Creative Officer of Cityneon. While this may take a longer time and present more tensions, he believes that it is vital in creating unforgettable experiences.

Cityneon partners entertainment giants like Marvel and Jurassic Park to create immersive experiences worldwide. The creative tension comes when these giants, as guardians of their brands, have certain expectations about how these experiences should be like, and what the KPIs are. But Cityneon is also engaged to push the boundaries and add value through creating innovative experiences and new ways for fans to interact with the brand.

Part of the success of Cityneon's Jurassic World exhibit came from this commitment to patiently hunt for latent needs.

Part of the success of Cityneon's Jurassic World exhibit came from this commitment to patiently hunt for latent needs. They were tasked to create a new, live experience for Universal Studios' Jurassic World. Traditionally, they had focused on enhancing the feeling of terror by bringing in larger-than-life animatronic dinosaurs that would walk around and roar at the guests. However, for this exhibit, Cityneon decided to spend time to conduct research to understand their guests.

They discovered that apart from seeing these terrifying creatures come to life, guests also wanted an element of connection, to be able to interact with and touch the dinosaurs. Cityneon then came up with the idea of introducing baby dinosaurs that came out from the lab serendipitously to surprise the guests.

They had to develop this idea, lobby it to Universal Studios and convince them to see its merits. While the process of researching, creating a brand new element, and explaining it to their client to get their buy-in was more tedious and difficult, it reaped great rewards, becoming one of the most impactful parts of the exhibition. *"You have to be patient and accept that it truly is going to be a process, and also a little bit of a balancing act,"* shared Mr Altidor.





“Design is not about just building things and testing it. We have to find the right problem, but people often skip that,” shared Teddy Zmrhal, Global Vice President, Design and Innovation at Salesforce. Instead of jumping to solutions or answers, Mr Zmrhal believes that design is about really trying to understand the questions. This means having the stamina to stay in ambiguity longer than anybody else despite the tension of being driven by monthly or quarterly revenue and targets.

“It’s the reframe; it’s figuring out what you are trying to really solve and then hunting for the insight. Even the prototyping and iteration can feel exasperating. Like when we’re six weeks into a 12-week project, sometimes (non-design-minded) executives get impatient for the challenge to be resolved,” adds Mr Zmrhal, explaining the tensions of having to balance design with the organisation’s KPIs and deadlines.

Mr Zmrhal shared that Salesforce tackles this by having two speeds. One side of the business focuses on running daily operations, ensuring that the business remains profitable, and revenue targets and KPIs are met. The other side of the business takes the time to do deep discovery, and explores how to create value and build long-term relationships with their clients. In doing so, they can meet immediate needs of the business as well as prepare for the future.

Instead of jumping to solutions or to answers, Mr Zmrhal believes that design is about really trying to understand the questions.



This principle is featured in **Aleph Labs’ Case Study** on **page 118** of this playbook.

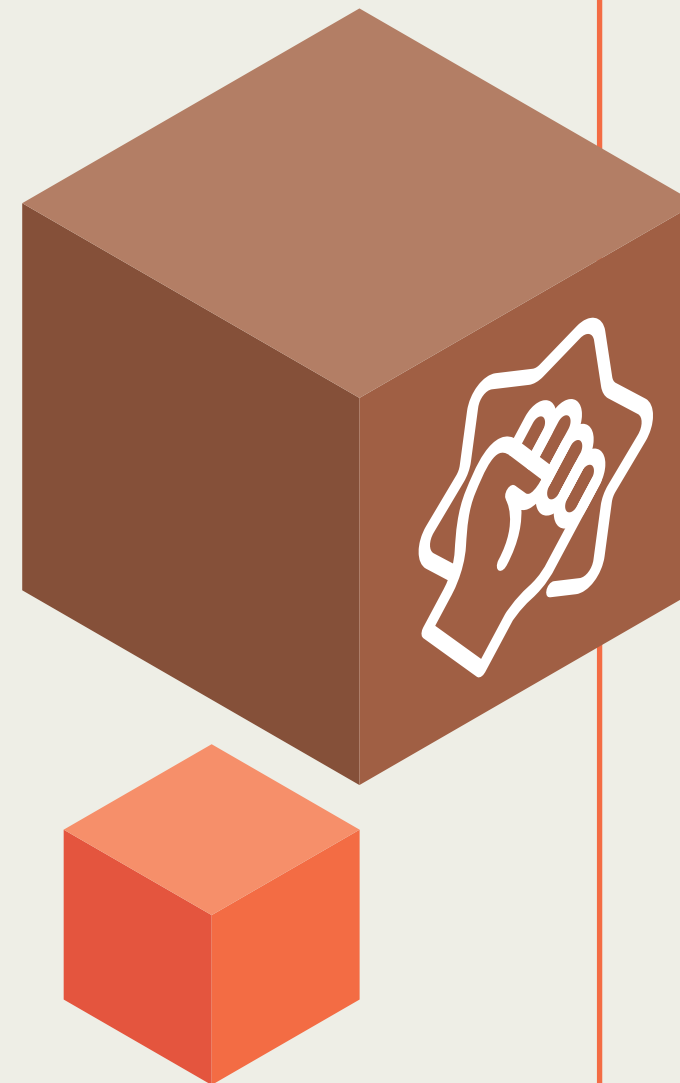
PRINCIPLE 22

Adopt an Aggressive Attitude Towards Improvement

Constantly and proactively look to improve and better meet users’ needs.

A fundamental feature of design is the cycle of experimentation and iteration. Instead of resting on their laurels, organisations that are design-led push the boundaries of innovation by continually looking at how they can better meet users’ needs. This is what sparks companies to constantly try new ways of doing things and improve on existing products, services and experiences.

The mindset of continuous improvement is tempered with the knowledge that these improvements should focus on addressing users’ needs. Organisations should push their staff to test new ideas and continually keep their ears to the ground to stay ahead of evolving users’ needs.



aleph

"I won't say we are perfect as an organisation, but a one per cent improvement every day is our mantra." – Jasneet Oberai, Happiness Director, Aleph Labs

For Aleph Labs (Aleph), this attitude towards improvement is termed as "Continuous Onboarding". Ms Oberai explained that it is about making each day seem like the first day of work, where staff are expected to bring the same levels of passion and enthusiasm to improve and develop daily. Part of how this is encouraged is through their mentoring system. Every staff is paired with a mentor who is not their direct supervisor. The mentor's role is to regularly engage with the mentee and have intentional conversations with them about what can be better, be it the mentee's own performance or the organisation's processes and environment.

On an organisational level, this attitude is reflected in their ecosystem of continuous learning. Aleph conducts the Aleph Academy and Academy Bytesized two to three times a month. All staff are encouraged to attend these sessions, where a plethora of subjects from personal branding to software development are discussed. A team of employees curate topics for each session, and appoint speakers who create the content and share their knowledge. This network of information sharing and learning continued through COVID-19, spanning seven countries, and is a platform for staff to learn and inspire one other to improve that one per cent every day.



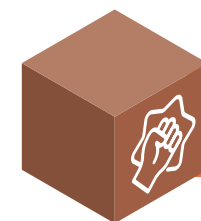
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PHILIPS

To keep up with the ever-changing needs of their users, Philips started the "Philips Unified Landscape for Social Engagement (PULSE)" to monitor social media and turn user data into insights. Gathering data scientists, media planners, creatives, brand guardians, marketing consultants and content managers in one dynamic space, the team can quickly and effectively respond to user feedback.

Data from these real-time feedback streams is worked into every part of the organisation. For example, the PULSE team picked up a trend in Indonesia a few years ago, realising that beef rendang recipes were popular during Ramadan. Philips quickly identified the latent needs of their users – cooking beef rendang requires constant attention and stirring to ensure that the base does not get burnt. To meet this emerging need, Philips swiftly released their own rendang recipe online, featuring their multicooker that was able to slow-cook rendang fuss-free.

This attitude of improving how they can meet users' needs is also present in their product design. Even after the launch of a product, Philips keeps a close watch on user data to see how it can be improved. Ivy Lai, CEO of Philips Singapore and Head of Finance for Philips ASEAN Pacific, shared that the first generation of the Philips Dental Airfloss was designed to produce one burst of air with each press of the button. By collecting data on how their customers were using the product, they realised that people had a tendency to press the button two to three times, feeling that multiple bursts of air made for better flossing. They took in this feedback and refined the product, launching the second generation of the Dental Airfloss that produces three bursts of air with each press of the button.



This principle is featured in the **Changi Airport Group's** Case Study on **page 126** of this playbook.

This attitude of
improving how
they can meet
users' needs is
also present in
their product
design.

Recommendations

PRINCIPLE 19

Launch quick, fail quick, learn quick

- Encourage staff to quickly launch the first prototype to fail, to maximise learning in the fastest time.
- Have conversations with clients often to iterate and co-create solutions.
- Create checkpoints and multi-stage reviews focused on learning and improvement of high-fidelity prototypes.

- Allow design career paths to rise to the C-suite level so that the spirit of iteration and failing quickly is normalised at the senior leadership.
- Make resources easily available and support staff in testing/prototyping and launching ideas.
- Equip staff with prototyping capabilities through workshops and hackathons.

- Be bold to test new ideas, with the mindset that failures are an opportunity to learn.
- Launch and keep iterating, rather than aim to launch the perfect solution from the start.
- Have the patience and resilience to keep iterating and refining based on users' feedback, until a desirable outcome is achieved.

PRINCIPLE 20

Synergise diversity of insights within the organisation

- Actively mediate between departments to provide clarity on decisions and elevate outcomes to a larger perspective beyond individual departments' KPIs.
- Test ideas with various internal stakeholders to gather a diversity of insights before allocating more resources to develop high-fidelity prototypes.
- Set up and operate in cross-functional project teams with an aim to create empathy and not amplify differences.

- Create protocols to ensure internal stakeholders enable one another, instead of drawing boundaries.
- Create flexibility in postings and job rotations within the organisation: by industry (client portfolios), horizontals (services) and geography.
- Organise sessions where different individuals/teams can share about a project they are working on or have worked on.

- Test out ideas and hypotheses in a smaller way before implementation, in order to address potential concerns from other departments.
- Actively gather perspectives from other departments and be willing to share information to enable colleagues' success.
- Reach out to team members who have previously worked with the user/client.

PRINCIPLE 21

Be patient with ambiguity to reap the ROI of design

- Tolerate untidiness, especially in terms of thinking and processes, while trusting the user research.
- Emphasise the importance of creating long-term value rather than hitting short-term KPIs and revenue targets.
- Carve out areas in the organisation where experimentation is encouraged and areas where strict compliance to SOPs is required.

- Run workshops to involve staff in creative problem-solving so that they better understand the pay-offs for investing time in the design process.
- Review the organisational structure and carve out teams to work on moonshot ideas.
- Make it clear in specific roles or projects where experimentation is encouraged and where strict compliance is required.

- Be patient as you are actively hunting for insights and latent needs; do not converge too quickly.
- Participate in experimental projects that may not necessarily yield immediate results.
- Take initiative to suggest or propose moonshot ideas that could have long-term benefits for the organisation.

PRINCIPLE 22

Adopt an aggressive attitude towards improvement

- Measure learning and improvement as key behavioural requirements in the organisation, beyond clocking training hours.
- Maintain processes that will continually look into user feedback and seek areas for improvement.
- Review past practices periodically to see if they are still relevant and can best serve the users.

- Encourage continuous learning to build staff's design, professional and personal skill sets.
- Encourage participation in improvement projects and propagate the ideals of challenging status quo.
- Establish performance appraisal systems that will reinforce the importance of learning and improvement beyond performance.

- Engage in continuous learning and try to learn something new and valuable to external or internal stakeholders every day.
- Take ownership of work processes by experimenting and making improvements, where possible.
- Seek feedback from clients/customers during and after the project is completed.



CASE

Studies

aleph

Aleph Labs

Design, Powered by Relationships



Background

Within the digital technology sector, keeping ahead of the times and pushing boundaries is vital. Constantly having to reinvent the user experience and deploy new technologies is a big challenge, yet Aleph Labs (Aleph) has thrived in this environment, becoming a prominent name in designing digital solutions. Since its inception in 2006, Aleph has expanded to seven countries across the region.

Having developed digital platforms such as an all-in-one banking application for a Regional Bank, Aleph has become known for their ability to provide creative solutions at the highest level of industry. Aleph maintains their edge in the ever-changing world of digital technology by inculcating a culture of trust that focuses on relationship building.

A common adage in management circles is that “things move at the speed of trust”. Trust is often an accelerator in the implementation of design because it supports iteration, experimentation and collaboration. These in turn empower sustainable innovation. Believing that culture needs to be constantly built upon to avoid having it fade into oblivion, Aleph invests significant resources into ensuring that innovation is continually infused into their day-to-day activities.

Our CEO often reminds us that culture has the lifespan of a banana. If you do not work on it, it will expire.

Poon Wen Ang
**Design Director & Chief Opportunity Officer,
Aleph Labs**

Relational Leadership No. 10: Socialise Design Through Conversations and Relationships

Create opportunities for conversations that build relationships and add value.

At Aleph, having strong relationships allows them to continually experiment with new concepts. Aleph's management understands that in taking a design-centric approach, change is often met with resistance. To counter this, ideas need to be socialised in order to gain momentum and come to fruition. Whether pitching ideas to internal or external stakeholders, Aleph socialises new concepts or changes to existing methodologies through small conversations. These micro moments make new ideas more palatable and prevent them from being judged too early. Once the idea has been socialised enough and its seed has been planted, then it can be properly presented and tested.

When dealing with external clients, Aleph takes time to understand the precise needs of a client, beyond simply meeting contractual requirements. To Aleph's management, it is about partnering with clients to discover how they can add value to the client's business, not just how they can develop a product. Clients are treated as partners and are invited to share in Aleph's internal rituals, such as their monthly Aleph Academies where they gather to share information on a wide range of subjects.

Internally, relationships are built by dedicating time to having conversations. These conversations are not shallow, but carefully planned and backed by data. Every employee at Aleph is assigned a mentor when they join the company. Their mentor is with them throughout their journey at Aleph and is in constant contact with them, whether or not they are involved in the same projects. Mentors and mentees can have conversations as frequently as every day, with topics ranging from work to their personal life or even their interests and hobbies. This system is designed to foster genuine relationships amongst Aleph's staff, and allow for the organisation to better understand the realities the staff face at work.

Aleph also practises journaling, where employees are asked to keep a daily or weekly journal detailing their thoughts, feelings, challenges and accomplishments. These are not limited to only work-related entries, but also anything personal that they might want to include. These journals are then reviewed by the mentorship, coaching or senior management team so that they can understand what each employee is going through. The data from these journals then forms the basis of the conversations that they have with employees, to ensure that every conversation is constructive.

By intentionally erecting structures to support relationship building and quality conversations, Aleph develops trust both internally and externally, allowing them to quickly test and launch new ideas.

Adoption of Design No. 18: **Reinforce Design Through Employee Development and Engagement Rituals**

Be consistent and intentional about reinforcing/ including design at multiple employee touchpoints.

Aleph adopts various rituals that aid in building relationships and fostering collaboration. One such initiative is their Friday Flocket, where breakfast is provided by the company every Friday and everyone is invited. This is not a mandated programme, but a casual gathering of colleagues. The intent behind the Flocket is for employees to gather and unwind at the end of the week. The Friday Flocket has evolved over the years, with improvements made based on feedback collected each week. These Flockets have come to be a time filled with activities, where events like birthdays and anniversaries are celebrated and where employees are invited to speak their minds freely. They can share anecdotes about their personal journeys, their hobbies and interests or showcase their talents – the floor is open.

Other rituals that Aleph has are the Aleph Academy and bite-sized Academy held at the end and middle of every month. These academies are virtual meetings that last for

either 30 or 60 minutes. This learning initiative is led by a team of employees who help to compile useful topics for each session. These topics can range from technical skills to presentation tips or personal development, and are designed to help staff grow both professionally and personally. These sessions are open to the public as well, in the spirit of sharing knowledge and information.

Aleph's HR team – termed the Happiness Team – also plans annual summits for various departments. These are cross-border gatherings, where department members from around the region come together to share ideas, brainstorm for new solutions and more.

Through rituals like these, Aleph reinforces their culture of collaboration by building relationships across the organisation.

Innovation by Design No. 21: **Be Patient with Ambiguity to Reap the ROI of Design**

Instead of settling for mediocre short-term gains, carve out areas for experimentation for exponential long-term results.

Enabling experimentation has yielded great results for Aleph, but it also requires patience and perseverance. For example, gaining the Regional Bank's trust in experimentation was the product of patiently building relationships over the years. The partnership started six years ago with a single vision shared with an executive at the bank for an all-in-one banking application.

Aleph's unique culture enables employees to continue pushing the boundaries of possibilities in their work.



It took years of relentlessly pursuing conversations and making small advances in order to earn the trust to move quicker and achieve greater things. Now, Aleph continues to collaborate with the bank to design an entire suite of products, including their internet, digital, wealth and corporate banking systems. Together, they are also experimenting in new areas such as artificial intelligence and machine learning. This is testament to the years of commitment to refining systems, processes and relationships.

Similarly, the process of restructuring the organisation and incorporating collaboration in their culture took almost five years. When Aleph first started this transition, they were driven by the knowledge that working in silos would lead to a slow and painful demise. They poured resources into experimenting with new methods of culture-building, to varying degrees of success. However, their patience and persistence to always improve have resulted in the successful collaborative culture they have today.

Conclusion

For Aleph, sustainable innovation is supported by a culture of continuous experimentation and employee collaboration. These elements of design are empowered by the relationships that they build both internally and externally. By patiently and continuously making the effort to build relationships and create rituals and structures to support them, Aleph has managed to empower the entire organisation to engage in design. Hence, Aleph's unique culture enables employees to continue pushing the boundaries of possibilities in their work.



Banyan Tree Group

Cultivating a Culture of Authentic Care



Background

Founded in 1994 by Singaporean husband-and-wife team, Ho Kwon Ping and Claire Chiang, Banyan Tree Group ('Banyan Tree' or 'the Group') has developed into a world-class brand in hospitality and services. From the glistening seas of the Maldives to the rustic bustle of Marrakech, the Group now manages 49 unique properties and 63 spas globally.

While most luxury resorts seek to produce high quality service for their guests, Banyan Tree believes that what sets their brand apart is authenticity – Banyan Tree employees genuinely care about the well-being of their guests. To sow the seeds of this authenticity, Banyan Tree has cultivated an organisational culture that wholeheartedly embraces user centricity and inspires its employees to care.

Adoption of Design No. 16: Use Design Internally, Not Just Externally

Apply design to the employee experience, because what is experienced internally will reinforce what is created externally.

Banyan Tree's leaders understand that showing genuine care amidst the emotionally challenging environment of high-end customer service is difficult to consistently achieve. Authentic service requires "emotional resources", such as empathy, presence of mind and good communication. Factors outside of work, like news or bad reviews,

How do we change the culture of work and the nature of work, so that people turn up to work as their whole selves?

Ho Ren Yung
**Senior Vice President of Brand HQ,
Banyan Tree Group**

can affect the emotional resources of their staff – referred to as associates.

To protect these emotional resources, Banyan Tree treats their associates' emotional, mental and physical health as a top priority. The reason is simple. Associates can only genuinely care for their guests and for their properties if they first feel cared for. This is encapsulated in their service profit chain model "Happy Associates = Happy Guests = Happy Shareholders".

Banyan Tree takes a multifaceted approach to staff well-being. They have a dedicated team that regularly engages with associates in every property through discussions and surveys, to ensure everyone feels heard and understood. On top of the usual Employee Satisfaction Surveys, Banyan Tree also utilises a unique "Organisational Wellbeing Index". This index asks lifestyle questions based on Banyan Tree's eight pillars of well-being, to determine a person's overall well-being beyond how they feel about work. The eight pillars are Sleep & Rest, Dietary Awareness, Bonding & Connection, Learning & Development, Physical Vitality, Cultivate the Mind, Harmony with Nature, and Sustained Practices. The management team then looks at these scores for each property to implement suitable initiatives and policies.

The physical well-being of associates is cared for through their onsite facilities and even the food provided on property, which is carefully catered to promote wellness. Emotional and mental well-being is served through services

such as teletherapy, where a team of mental health practitioners, counsellors and coaches are available for associates to speak with anonymously. This was necessary at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

To promote their sense of purpose beyond their day-to-day responsibilities at work, associates are given time to participate in volunteer work, spend time in nature during work hours, and engage with the local community.

Associates are also invited to connect with the larger organisation through participation in group-wide digital forums, and cross-property projects and initiatives. These gatherings help to foster a sense of global community, so that associates know that they are not alone in the challenges they face, and that their work can have a positive global impact. In showing their commitment to care for every aspect of their associates' well-being, Banyan Tree sets the bar high for how their associates should care for their guests.

Adoption of Design No. 18: Reinforce Design Through Employee Development and Engagement Rituals

Be consistent and intentional about reinforcing/ including design at multiple employee touchpoints.

The culture of personalised care is reinforced in Banyan Tree's training and development system. Their training and development does not follow a one-size-fits-all model. Each associate has

For Banyan Tree, genuinely understanding and caring for their user is of utmost importance.

an individually designed development path that takes their desires, interests and strengths into account, and every property has their own learning and development team that creates and facilitates online learning for their associates.

Associates are also allowed to co-create their career development path; if they express the desire to work overseas, they could be assigned or sent on an attachment to an overseas property. Some staff who express an interest in exploring new roles are given the training and opportunity to do so.

Many of their associates have been with the company for over a decade, taking on a variety of roles and assuming leadership positions over the years. One such example is the current Head of HR and the Banyan Tree Management Academy (BTMA), Ms Ungkhana Tosilanon, who has been with the company for 20 years. She started out as a secretary, and then took on roles in front office operations, training, corporate administration and finance before becoming the Director of HR for Banyan Tree Phuket and subsequently progressing on to her current role.

To showcase the management's commitment to caring for the long-term development of their associates, the BTMA was established in 2008 to manage all the development and training needs. With a training budget pegged at four per cent of payroll – double industry's standards – Banyan Tree spares no expense when it comes to staff development. In addition to certification in the usual fields for the hotel industry such as front office operations, bartending and engineering, the academy offers leadership and mentoring

programmes, language programmes and even life enrichment programmes such as mindfulness and empathy building. These programmes and resources are made easily accessible through partnerships with organisations such as Cornell University's eCornell and Harvard University's Harvard ManageMentor.

By employing these practices, Banyan Tree formalises their culture of care into tangible systems and processes. Employees are also reminded of the importance of the culture in their various interactions with the organisation, thus reinforcing the values and behaviours that the leadership team hopes for associates to display.

Inspirational Leadership No. 4: Walk the Talk and Model Design

Leaders define acceptable behaviours by their actions. Design culture must be seen, not just heard.

The expectation to sincerely care for guests and associates is not limited to frontline staff, the expectation extends to the top. For Banyan Tree, being a family-owned business means that the founders and their family take the lead in displaying these values.

The Founder and Executive Chairman, Mr Ho Kwon Ping, personally collects and shares anecdotes of associates who have displayed the organisation's values or have acted in line with the organisation's purpose. He shares these stories in group-wide emails, making sure that these associates are publicly recognised and rewarded. This communicates that good practices are noticed and appreciated by the leadership team.



Ms Claire Chiang, the Co-Founder and Senior Vice President (VP) of Banyan Tree Group, is involved in the group's learning and development operations. She leads the curation and creation of learning resources that can best meet associates' needs, and even personally conducts training for some modules. Putting herself in a position where she is visibly driving the organisation's culture of authentic care is one of the ways that Banyan Tree's leaders role model their values.

The couple's daughter, Ho Ren Yung, is currently the Senior VP of Brand HQ. She rose through the ranks at Banyan Tree, starting out in operations in the kid's club before taking on various roles in both the front and back offices. She believes that it is important that staff recognise the next generation of family members, and emphasises the organisation's belief in working your way up, in order to be in touch with guests and ground operations.

In her current role, Ms Ho is responsible for the maintenance and deepening of Banyan Tree's culture. Her mandate is to be in touch with associates on the ground and with guests, continually looking at improving their experience with Banyan Tree. She personally interacts

with guests to better understand their needs, and initiates projects or processes that would benefit associates.

By being personally involved in nurturing employee well-being, culture building and career development, Banyan Tree's leadership team models what it means to prioritise the needs of both their guests and associates.

Conclusion

For Banyan Tree, genuinely understanding and caring for their user is of utmost importance. This belief is evident in the way the organisation approaches staff welfare, applying design to understand and meet the holistic needs of their associates. It is also seen in their approach towards staff development and training, committing resources to the personalised and holistic development of their associates. The leadership team embodies this ethos by being personally and visibly invested in their associates and guests. Consequently, they form an organisational culture that prioritises user centricity, providing staff with an environment that motivates and empowers them to authentically care for their guests.

Crafting a Culture of Continuous Improvement



Background

The first point of contact for most new visitors to Singapore is Changi Airport, which has blossomed into one of the world's best airports and a bona fide source of national pride. It has won over 600 Best Airport awards since 1988, but their management continues to strive to improve year on year.

Committed to consistently redefine what a first-class experience is, Changi Airport Group (CAG) has managed to grow and evolve with the ever-changing needs and expectations of passengers from all over the globe. They have championed passenger experience initiatives never before seen in the industry, like the world's first transit-area swimming pool and the world's first indoor airport butterfly garden.

Through constant innovation and growth, CAG has managed to secure its foothold as a world leader in providing stellar passenger experiences. Anyone who walks through Changi Airport, however, would realise that the passenger experience is not determined by any single organisation. Instead, there are over 200 vendors and agencies that operate in tandem within the airport, and the ability to galvanise all these agencies to continually learn and evolve is what has contributed to CAG's success.

In order to continually achieve success on a global stage for over three decades, an organisation cannot simply follow a rigid set of

Through constant innovation and growth, CAG has managed to secure its foothold as a world leader in providing stellar passenger experiences.

standards or procedures, because consumer standards change with time. CAG has overcome that by instead establishing a set of principles that have guided and will continue to guide the organisation into the future. These principles dictate that the organisation embraces a culture of learning and innovation.

Innovation by Design No. 22: Adopt an Aggressive Attitude Towards Improvement

Constantly and proactively look to improve and better meet users' needs.

Despite their status as the world's most awarded airport, CAG continues to strive to improve the passenger experience.

"We use terms like first class, luxury, but how do you define luxury? For us, luxury means that you had expected a certain standard, but the standard provided was way beyond what you expected," shared Jayson Goh, Managing Director of Airport Operations Management. With this goal to always exceed user expectations, CAG commits to understanding and responding to the needs of their passengers.

Peppered throughout the airport are feedback stations for passengers to indicate their satisfaction with the experiences at various touchpoints, such as check-in counters, sales counters and restrooms. These stations are part of the Service Workforce Instant Feedback Transformation (SWIFT) System, introduced in

2010 to allow the airport to quickly respond to user feedback.

The system is designed to relay real-time information to digital assistants represented by over 300 frontline staff, who can take necessary actions to improve immediately. A bad rating for a restroom because the floor is wet is instantly transmitted to a cleaning supervisor, who then dispatches cleaners to dry the floor – all within 15 minutes. The system is also integrated with their vendors', and maintenance issues like a broken chair can be logged by staff and fixed by their contractors within 30 minutes. This allows CAG to maintain user centricity in their operations – attending to passengers' needs or impressing them, despite the constantly changing group of passengers and visitors.

Apart from these micro-improvements to meet passengers' immediate needs, CAG also invests heavily in finding ways to improve the user experience on a larger scale. They conduct deep research into the psychology of passengers, to uncover needs that may sometimes seem counter-intuitive.

For example, when CAG was designing Terminal 4, they looked into ways to leverage technology to improve the passenger experience. While conventional wisdom would say that the human touch is important in service delivery, their research showed that passengers would choose to interact with a self-help kiosk rather than a

CAG staff are encouraged to experiment and innovate by simplifying the process of accessing resources for innovation projects.

human if there was a significant difference in speed and efficiency. This led to them designing their first fully automated departure system, which was a success.

CAG is also continuously on the lookout for new innovations in airport operations, studying everything from behavioural patterns and stress points of passengers, the effect of natural light on passenger moods, layouts that would be most visually-pleasing, and technological improvements in baggage systems. The data collected from these various sources then informs the design decisions that CAG makes to improve the passenger experience. This commitment to always better meet their passengers' needs permeates everything that they do. It is made clear to the entire organisation that constant improvement is a core mantra.

Design as Identity No. 12: **Make User Centricity Part of Your Core Identity**

Ensure that user centricity is embraced by all in the organisation, not just the designers.

For CAG, the passenger experience is not determined by a single company. They have over 200 partners and vendors operating within the airport, each with their own operations and staff. In order to orchestrate a first-class passenger experience, all these vendors need to operate in sweet harmony.

Sometimes this means that certain parts of the process have to be sub-optimised for the benefit of the whole passenger experience.

For example, while it may seem desirable for immigration to be cleared as quickly as possible, it may detract from the overall experience if that means that passengers end up having to stand around waiting to collect their bags. It may instead be better for the overall passenger experience to take a little longer at immigration so that the waiting time is distributed and there is less static waiting.

As Mr Goh puts it, *"Sometimes trying to overemphasise efficiency at one touchpoint may disrupt the experience at the system level."* In order to curate a great overall experience for passengers, it is therefore necessary for the entire organisation to focus on user centricity rather than on optimising their own processes.

CAG facilitates this by being in constant communication with their partners, explaining to them about how their operations interact with the overall passenger experience, and finding ways to meet their needs without compromising user experience. As such, the entire organisation knows that whether they are staff, vendors, partners or contractors, as long as they operate in Changi Airport, passenger experience will always be the North Star.

Adoption of Design No. 15: **Make Design Simple for Everyone to Use**

Ensure that design resources are easily accessed and simplify design into concrete steps or behaviours.

While CAG acts as a central body that coordinates the overall design of the passenger



experience, they are also aware that they cannot fully control every aspect of it. Hence, CAG staff are encouraged to experiment and innovate by simplifying the process of accessing resources for innovation projects.

To reduce the barriers to ground-up innovation, CAG has introduced a "tinkering fund" which is set aside for staff-led projects. Approval for the use of this fund requires only a one-page proposal that is signed by one sponsor out of around 50 possible signatories. This makes it extremely easy for staff to submit their ideas for improvement and to see these ideas come to fruition and implemented in the airport.

In alignment with their North Star, approvals are based on a measure of "whose life is improved", to encourage more experimentation that is user-centric. And to encourage greater participation, the report that staff have to submit at the end of these projects is focused on what they learnt in the process, not the project's return on investment (ROI).

These initiatives have resulted in simple but nuanced improvements, such as installing a bench after security checks for passengers to

put on their shoes, or having compartmentalised trays so that loose items stay organised when they are being scanned. Employees throughout the organisation are allowed to participate in and take ownership of the process of improving the passenger experience.

Conclusion

Since CAG first received the Best Airport in the World award in 1988, the world has seen the invention of the mobile phone, the rise of the internet, and the advent of social media. The needs and desires of consumers have developed as well. In order to continue staying ahead of the times, CAG makes it clear to all employees and partners that the passenger experience is their top priority, and that continually improving that experience is vital to their organisation's survival. They support staff in embracing this mindset by creating systems and procedures that simplify participation. This allows management and staff to build a culture of continuous improvement. User centricity and staff empowerment have allowed the organisation to keep pushing the boundaries of what the world's best airport should or can be.



DBS

Transforming into a User-Centric Culture



Background

The Development Bank of Singapore was founded in July 1968, when Singapore was a month shy of turning three years old as an independent nation. Since then, Singapore has experienced exponential growth – both in terms of its economy and global stature. DBS – as the bank was renamed in 2003 – has played an instrumental role in Singapore’s development, and matched the country’s growth with growth of its own.

Unfortunately by 2009, DBS had earned itself the nickname ‘Damn Bloody Slow’. A deeply entrenched culture of corporate hierarchy resulted in a lack of communication between management and ground staff. This, in turn, led to subpar customer experience.

In the same year, DBS appointed its new CEO, Piyush Gupta, with the mandate to lead the change in DBS customers’ banking experience. To win the hearts and minds of its customers, DBS knew it had to build a system and nurture a culture that placed user experience at the heart of corporate decision-making. The bank’s existing organisational hierarchy left customer-facing employees with little power to make decisions and no avenues to provide feedback to management. Putting customers first in an organisation where decision-makers rarely interacted with customers – or even ground staff – was not going to be easy.

DBS understood that in order for their employees to recognise the importance of user centricity, the organisation needed to be employee-centric first.

Relational Leadership No. 8: Make It Safe to be Honest with Leaders

Leaders remove both institutional and psychological barriers for staff to openly and honestly connect with them.

For DBS to connect well with their users, they had to foster better communication between the management and ground staff. This meant tackling the structural and psychological barriers that prevented staff from giving honest feedback.

DBS set about dismantling the deep-seated hierarchy by removing special privileges like lifts that were restricted to executives only. They also removed corporate titles from emails and their internal systems. In the past, a corporate rank was such a central consideration in how DBS employees interacted with one another that it was normal to refer to someone by their job title. Today, Mr Gupta insists employees address him by his first name, contributing to their culture of openness and equality.

The shift towards being more collaborative also translated into the physical workspace, and DBS set about redesigning their offices. Traditional meeting rooms that had fixed seating arrangements according to hierarchy were replaced with spaces where speakers simply stand at a whiteboard in front of their colleagues. Work cubicles with high partitions were replaced with an open seating plan. Each department was

allowed to design their own workspace’s theme and layout, instead of using a standard motif mandated from the top. Collaborative spaces and casual seating arrangements have been introduced to encourage a more cohesive and agile work environment.

Additionally, the leadership team was trained to host discussions in ways that encourage participation. Managers were taught to be the last to speak in meetings and to reframe their questions to sound less authoritative. They were also taught techniques such as round robin questioning, so that all staff have an opportunity to voice their opinions. In making these changes, DBS aimed to create an environment where staff could feel more comfortable approaching their leaders and sharing their ideas and opinions candidly.

Adoption of Design No. 16: Use Design Internally, Not Just Externally

Apply design to the employee experience, because what is experienced internally will reinforce what is created externally.

DBS understood that in order for their employees to recognise the importance of user centricity, the organisation needed to be employee-centric first. The brand promise of “Making Banking Joyful” does not only apply to how the bank serves its customers, but its employees as well. Internal practices were re-

evaluated based on whether they made working at DBS a more joyful experience for staff.

DBS' HR department took the lead in role modelling user centricity by looking to understand and meet the needs of their users – the employees. The team organises focus groups, conducts surveys and facilitates frequent candid discussions with bank staff. These feedback channels allow management to collect data about the employee experience. HR uses this data to define the most common “staff personas” to detail the different journeys employees might embark on during their employment with the bank.

These journeys are then designed according to the changing needs of an employee over the course of a career. As employees mature into their role, their needs and desires mature as well. Career goals change according to how a career develops, and an individual's journey ahead changes as their staff persona changes. Through the attention paid to staff personas and career maps, the employee experience is carefully curated from the moment a contract is signed until retirement or resignation. Every year, the bank commits to improving a number of these journeys, and their people experience

team comes up with solutions for problems identified by staff.

By doing this, DBS shows commitment to improving experiences, of staff and customers.

Adoption of Design No. 15: **Make Design Simple for Everyone to Use**

Ensure that design resources are easily accessed and simplify design into concrete steps or behaviours.

To aid their employees to think user-first, DBS has developed behavioural guides that embody their culture and values. Rather than writing lengthy lists of dos and don'ts, DBS uses a Singaporean favourite – acronyms. Easy to remember acronyms and catchphrases act as behavioural cues for DBS staff in various scenarios.

RED – Respectful, Easy to deal with, Dependable – guides customer-facing staff's demeanour and actions when dealing with clients.

MOJO – Meeting Owner, Joyful Observer – are participants in a meeting who ensure that the meeting has a clear agenda, starts and ends on time, and everyone is given an equal voice.

By simplifying design into easy-to-remember behavioural cues, DBS ensures that every employee is equipped to play an active role in designing user centricity.



ATE – Attract, Transact and Engage – summarises the bank's attitude towards digitising different aspects of banking in order to attract and engage customers.

Each acronym is workshopped with staff before they are launched. They are also accompanied by specially designed training materials and programmes so that employees fully understand what it means to act according to these cues. More than just knowing what these acronyms stand for, employees are also informed of the intentions behind them, so they can better understand the bank's purpose and goals in rolling these out.

To ensure that these behavioural guides are taken seriously, they are then encoded into the bank's performance appraisal system. Beyond measuring achievements, employees are evaluated on how they display DBS' values.

DBS also uses an easy to remember brand promise like “Making Banking Joyful” so that employees have a simple question to ask

themselves whenever they need to make decisions: “Does this make banking more joyful for my user?”

By simplifying design into easy-to-remember behavioural cues, DBS ensures that every employee is equipped to play an active role in designing user centricity.

Conclusion

Creating a user-centric organisation is more complex than simply implementing a design methodology. DBS has approached this by ensuring that staff can easily take a user-centric approach to their work. The environment of open and honest communication allows for customers' needs to be quickly met. While DBS still has a long journey ahead, their efforts to nurture design into their culture have already transformed “Damn Bloody Slow” to the World's Best Bank.



Government Technology Agency
of Singapore

Designing for a Nation



Background

As a statutory board that reports directly to the Prime Minister's Office, the Government Technology Agency of Singapore (GovTech) is responsible for the digital transformation of Singapore's public sector. Singapore's government has always prided itself on its efficiency, as part of the country's commitment to being the most convenient place to live, work or do business in the region. As the country began its transition into a Smart Nation, it was no surprise that the government planned to lead by example.

With citizens' high expectations of the government, failure is never an option when it comes to delivering government services. It is not easy for GovTech's management to maintain a balance between experimentation and effectiveness, given the constantly changing needs of citizens, the rapid transformation of the digital world, and the continued perfection expected from the government.

Despite these challenging conditions, GovTech manages to remain design-centric in its approach to digitisation. According to DN Prasad and Hefen Wong, GovTech's Senior Director of Strategy, People and Organisation, and Director of Technology Management Office & Development and Organisation Transformation respectively, GovTech's continued commitment to design centricity is enabled by their core values of Agility, Boldness and Collaboration. These values are key to building their design-

The entire organisation is structured to be able to rapidly respond to emerging user needs.

led culture, and have been applied through the following principles.

Visionary Leadership No. 3: **Be Agile to Adjust Strategy**

Be ready to pivot quickly to better serve changing user needs.

One of the biggest challenges faced by companies trying to remain design-centric is adapting to changes in users' needs. For most companies, thorough research into buyer personas and customer demographics allows strategy to remain well-informed. For GovTech, however, their customers make up the entire nation – from the Prime Minister himself, to the many government agencies, to hundreds of thousands of Singaporean businesses, and to the six million residents of Singapore.

Keeping up with the needs of every person in the country is no small task, which is why Agility is one of GovTech's core values. The entire organisation is structured to be able to rapidly respond to emerging user needs. Teams are organised by the projects they are working on, while the engineering team works closely to create solutions for all of GovTech's different stakeholders. All projects have fixed checkpoints in their life cycles that are meant to allow teams to assess user needs, review progress and ensure necessary changes are made quickly.

A telling example of GovTech's agility is something everyone in Singapore is all-too-

familiar with – SafeEntry. When the Multi-Ministry Task Force announced that every business in Singapore needed to use SafeEntry, GovTech had 10 days to develop a system that would enable effective contact tracing for six million people.

GovTech quickly realised that the webform they had in place to replace hardcopy contact tracing was not going to be effective as a national system. By combining and repurposing other existing systems, GovTech was able to produce the QR code check-in and check-out process. In the opening weekend, however, more than 58,000 locations and 30,000 businesses applied for their own unique SafeEntry codes. The sheer volume of applications meant that GovTech needed to quickly devise a way to maximise the efficiency of the onboarding process.

Leveraging Corppass, they reduced each application's transaction time to just six seconds, and at the height of SafeEntry's national adoption, GovTech provisioned 16,600 QR codes in one day. When Phase One started and businesses began reopening, a new issue emerged – businesses were having trouble placing their QR codes on the SafeEntry posters. GovTech once again sprung into action, changing the system and integrating it with the poster, such that when businesses made their applications online, each SafeEntry poster was automatically generated along with the QR code.

The job was hardly completed, however. Apart from developing a solution for businesses,



GovTech's responsibility extended to ensuring that citizens with varying levels of digital literacy were able to use this new system. The team at GovTech thus came up with the idea of allowing SafeEntry through both the digital scanning of QR codes and the scanning of physical National Registration Identity Cards. However, this caused long queues to form, and users got frustrated.

This new problem led to the team developing a third option to check in, which was to allow Singpass app users to check in via an in-built location-based function in the app. This was useful for users who were physically impaired and found it difficult to scan QR codes without assistance. The subsequent relaxation of safe-distancing rules in Phase Two allowed groups of people to go out together, and GovTech responded with another new feature – group check-ins.

All these changes happened progressively, along with feedback from residents. SafeEntry has become one of GovTech's most widely used products, and is testament to the organisation's ability to adapt quickly to changing user needs and deliver unique solutions.

Innovation by Design No. 20: **Synergise Diversity of Insights Within the Organisation**

Gather perspectives from different departments and levels to create alignment and holistic solutions.

"The way different teams had to come together to put SafeEntry together, was an example of being agile, being bold and being collaborative," Ms Hefen Wong said. Going beyond agility to meet users' needs, GovTech's leadership also strongly encourages a culture of inclusion and collaboration in the workplace.

At GovTech, teams are structured to emphasise cross-functional collaboration and to ensure a diversity of expertise. Employees are split into squads and tribes. A squad, made up of no more than 10 people, is a co-located, cross-functional and stable team that works closely together. This structure is designed to unite different specialists for a common goal, allow them to learn from one another and facilitate a wide range of perspectives when it comes to product development.

As a public agency, GovTech is accountable to the government and ultimately, the citizens.

Tribes are then a collection of squads that work on similar products. This means that squads which worked on TraceTogether and SafeEntry, for example, were in the same tribe. This allows for cross-squad collaboration to happen quickly and enables easy knowledge sharing. This structure also enhances GovTech's ability to consider the needs of different user groups. The transparent and fluid nature of the tribe and squad system means each specialist's knowledge and perspectives seep into every GovTech project.

Adoption of Design No. 17: **Empower Employees with Autonomy to Meet Users' Needs**

Within set goals and constraints, delegate decision-making authority to the lowest possible level to better meet stakeholders' needs.

The principle that keeps GovTech's tribes and squads buzzing like a hive of digital solutions is employee autonomy. Within the goals and constraints of government work, GovTech manages to allow employees to make decisions that best serve users' needs, without seeking approval up the chain of command. When it comes to technological solutions that address User Interface or User Experience (UI/UX) issues, developers have the licence to disagree with anyone – even a minister – to best serve the needs of end users.

"The GovTech development teams have a lot of autonomy to decide how they want to improve their products, based on continuous user feedback, and how people are using the products. They don't need to seek specific approval for the UI of their products," Ms Wong explained. The reason behind such freedom is simple

– technology is such a wide and constantly evolving field of study that management accepts that they do not always know all the answers. Meanwhile, experts on the ground who work day in, day out to meet users' needs, are vividly aware of the resources at their disposal.

This autonomy, however, does not come without accountability. As a public agency, GovTech is accountable to the government and ultimately, the citizens. This means that their resources need to be allocated responsibly and all their projects are held to a high standard. To enable autonomy with these constraints, GovTech's management team does regular check-ins on the projects. These checkpoints are designed not to limit decision-making capacity, but to ensure that resources are allocated according to the most pressing needs. This system helps employees to receive the support they need to empower them to experiment and innovate, while balancing it with the burden of responsible expenditure.

Conclusion

GovTech operates as a go-between of technology giants and government agencies. In this unique position, GovTech has to strike a balance between the ambiguity of design and the need for clear and concrete results. They ensure that their teams are empowered to make decisions while remaining accountable to the resources used. They also embrace an agile approach to their work, which also translates into flexible structures for collaboration. This helps the organisation to build a design-led culture that allows them to be responsive to the needs of millions of users, while meeting the high standards expected of Singapore's government.



HOPE Technik

Engineering a Culture of Speed and Agility



Background

The average person may not have heard of HOPE Technik, but everyone has likely seen or even used their products. They are a homegrown engineering company founded in 2006. They have developed high-tech solutions for customers from a wide range of industries, like aerospace, defence and robotics. Their most public-facing projects include the Singapore Civil Defence Force's light firefighting vehicles – known as the Red Rhinos, and multiple COVID-19 prevention innovations.

Back in 2009, HOPE Technik was commissioned to develop a Light Fire Attack Vehicle (LFAV) that was especially suited for Singapore's urban environment. Currently in its fifth iteration, the vehicle packs five times as much firefighting power as a traditional pumper fire truck. They can switch between driving mode and pumping mode with the push of one button. They are also equipped with emergency medical devices and enough space for a full team of four firefighters and a paramedic. All this are fitted into an extremely lightweight, highly mobile firefighting machine, purpose-built for Singapore's busy and narrow roads. This Batmobile-inspired design took HOPE Technik just 15 days to build with a team of five people.

This ability to quickly design and build unique solutions is what propelled HOPE Technik to where they are today, standing shoulder to shoulder with

We believe that if you send one person, he should be able to take out the welding torch, use the computer, connect wires, make lights work, blow something up, or machine something.

Peter Ho
CEO,
HOPE Technik

giants in the engineering industry. In 2012, HOPE Technik clinched a deal with Airbus to develop a SpacePlane demonstrator. It is designed to take passengers up to an altitude of 100 kilometres, entering space. A working prototype for this plane was launched in 2014, just two years after HOPE Technik won the contract. Part of what created this incredible speed and effectiveness is the unique culture that HOPE Technik has nurtured.

Design as Identity No. 11: **Embed Design in Your Values and People Practices**

Make organisational and people decisions based on design values.

At HOPE Technik, their values are expressed as “Rules of Engagement”. These “Rules of Engagement” are not simply introduced during orientation and quickly forgotten, but woven into HOPE Technik's day-to-day operations.

The first rule of engagement reads “It is a passion and a career, not just a job”. Of course, every company would love to have staff who are passionate about what they do, but for HOPE Technik, it is not just encouraged, it is required. The demand for passion begins with their recruitment process. Holden Ngoh, People and

Culture Manager, attends every first interview, in order to assess a candidate's passion and behavioural attributes.

“Even for a one-week internship with us... We always ask them, ‘What is your passion?’”
Mr Ngoh said.

While they have very high technical standards – candidates often need to take tests during the interviews – the first qualifying factor is passion. Mr Ngoh said he once interviewed a candidate who came from a customer service background, but was looking to make a career switch into engineering. The HOPE Technik team assessed that the candidate had a very high interest and passion for engineering, but lacked the skills and experience. Nonetheless, HOPE Technik's HR team decided to hire the candidate and enrol her in a traineeship programme with the Institute of Technical Education. She is now a member of their team, proficient in mechanical, electrical and composite engineering.

The second rule of engagement is “We are engineering commandos – small in number, strong in force”. This means that every engineer is expected to be a cross-disciplinary expert, able to handle both mechanical and technical

HOPE Technik is so committed to finding solutions instead of laying blame that they have a specific meeting for it – “War Rooms”.

work. This allows engineers to decide on the spot, without wasting time checking with multiple experts. HOPE Technik’s People and Culture team designs a robust training schedule for all staff. They are trained and equipped with knowledge and experience from all of HOPE Technik’s operations.

Each of their 10 Rules of Engagement are backed by people practices that support it. Rule number four “Focus on the goal, enjoy the process” is the reason HOPE Technik had flexible working hours and work-from-home long before COVID-19 hit. Their office is designed as a playground for engineers, with a slide from the second floor to the lobby, a rock climbing wall, and beer available for staff to consume.

Inspirational Leadership No. 6: **No Blame When Failure Occurs**

With staff giving their best effort, leaders take responsibility for team failure. When problems arise, teams focus on finding solutions instead of assigning blame.

HOPE Technik’s CEO, Peter Ho, believes that this is the hardest principle for everyone to follow. When something goes wrong, it is easy to point fingers. Yet if the focus is on finding someone to blame, then everyone from the engineer to their supervisors, division heads and group chief

engineers should bear a part of the blame since they were all involved in the decision-making process. As such, HOPE Technik makes it clear to all leaders and staff that pointing fingers at one another is not tolerated. Instead, they focus their energies on collectively finding solutions, and understanding where the faults are and how to prevent or rectify them.

HOPE Technik is so committed to finding solutions instead of laying blame that they have a specific meeting for it – “War Rooms”. When an issue arises, a team consisting of staff from various departments and of different levels of seniority are called into War Room meetings. This team would usually include a senior member of the leadership team, if not Mr Ho himself. The leadership team feels that when a problem arises, it is their responsibility to roll up their sleeves and help to find a solution, instead of pointing fingers.

In these meetings, everyone is allowed to voice their ideas or objections, whether they are the Chief Technology Officer or a trainee. Once a satisfactory solution is found, the team then heads back to their own projects. By approaching failures in this manner, HOPE Technik ensures that staff can feel safe to experiment and explore new ideas. This allows the spirit of innovation to thrive and prevents good ideas from dying due to a fear of punishment.



Innovation by Design No. 19: **Launch Quick, Fail Quick, Learn Quick**

Launch at the earliest possible opportunity with the intention to learn from failure and solve for the right problems.

For HOPE Technik, this principle is expressed in their concept of a Prototype 0, which is a rapidly produced first version of a machine. It passes engineering quality and analysis, is functional and does its job. But it is also ugly. Wires stick out everywhere, raw steel is exposed; it is rusty, unpainted and looks unapproachable. The purpose of creating Prototype 0 is so that they can conduct functional testing quickly and involve clients in testing as early in the design process as possible.

This concept is not always simple to apply. Especially for an SME just starting out, the pressure to impress every potential client in the first presentation is huge. It takes an immense amount of groundwork and communication with the client so that they know exactly what

to expect when they see this prototype. Not all clients appreciate the Prototype 0 concept. When clients demand more refined prototypes, the leadership team of HOPE Technik makes their stand clear – Prototype 0 saves clients’ time and resources down the line.

Conclusion

HOPE Technik’s values form the bedrock of their corporate culture. Management ensures that these values are well-propagated and guarded by their company practices. Leadership inspires continuous innovation and ideation by being solution-focused rather than engaging in witch-hunts and scapegoating. Being committed to failing and learning quickly allows them to produce solutions that genuinely satisfy users. When these things come together, it creates an organisational culture that enables their staff to be agile and effective in meeting users’ needs. HOPE Technik’s culture gives them a unique competitive advantage and provides them with a platform to reach the stars.



iHub Solutions

Driving People-Centric Solutions



Background

When thinking about design-led organisations, it is easy to think of IT or engineering companies that leverage design as a core component of their business. It is less obvious then to identify design in a company that seemingly requires little design in developing their products, such as a logistics firm.

For husband-and-wife team Koh San Joo and Catherine Tan, however, design is a crucial aspect of their warehouse and logistics business – iHub Solutions (iHub). iHub is a local firm that has made a name for itself in the realm of complex logistics. Serving over 200 clients across four countries, iHub has gained national recognition for integrating digital technology in the development of innovative warehousing and logistics solutions.

At its core, iHub offers solutions for storing and delivering goods – like many other logistics firms. But what sets iHub apart is their emphasis on placing people at the centre of what they do. This culture of user centricity is what drives them to constantly develop new solutions that can meet the needs of all their users, while also making work more pleasant for their staff. Instead of viewing jobs as a network of routes that need to be fulfilled, iHub's management sees a network of people and vehicles that need to be connected as efficiently as possible.

Design as Identity No. 13: Holistically Serve the Ecosystem of Users

Understand the context of users across the value chain to best serve their needs.

When considering how to better serve customers in a logistics business, it is natural to think of ways to make deliveries faster. After all, it is a reasonable assumption to make that the best logistics business is the one that can get your goods delivered as quickly and cheaply as possible. However, iHub Co-Founder and Director, Catherine Tan, believes that holistically

Sometimes it's not about shifting a problem, but it's looking at it in totality and saying, let's relook how things ought to be done.

Catherine Tan
Co-Founder & Director,
iHub Solutions

serving users goes well beyond just delivering goods faster. Instead, iHub designs solutions that help the client achieve optimal efficiency beyond just the delivery process.

"Redesign does not necessarily happen on our end, but we help the client to identify where fixes should begin, and sometimes that starting point could be on their end," Ms Tan said. This approach means that as a logistics solutions provider, iHub helps to improve a client's efficiency by collaborating with them to identify weaknesses in the client's processes. This could mean helping the client to develop and integrate software that would automate some processes, or simply requiring that clients submit digital files instead of hardcopy files, helping them to digitise their paperwork. As Ms Tan shares, *"Sometimes it's not about shifting a problem, 'so here's my problem and I outsourced to you, you solve the problem', but it's looking at it in totality and saying, let's relook how things ought to be done. It requires a lot of hard work, and a lot of collaboration."*

Additionally, iHub's approach to user centricity is not just applied to how iHub serves their immediate clients. The logistics provider also considers the needs of their clients' entire supply chain, both upstream and downstream. For example, iHub handles the logistics for Alison's Pantry, a nuts supplier from New Zealand. The nuts are stored in iHub warehouses, and distributed to 55 supermarkets by iHub vans.

Their service does not stop there. In designing a solution for Alison's Pantry, iHub considered that the people buying these nuts at the supermarkets would want them to be as crisp and fresh as possible. Hence, iHub set up specialised spring gauges in every supermarket, which trigger an alert in iHub's systems when the amount of nuts in a particular store drops below a certain weight. This allows iHub to ensure that the nuts can be restocked on-demand, with the precise amounts. By taking this approach rather than restocking in fixed batches and intervals, iHub reduces wastage and ensures maximum freshness for Alison's Pantry's customers.

Additionally, the data from this system is fed back up to Alison's Pantry's headquarters in New Zealand. iHub's client can then be as efficient as possible in managing their supply chain. This is a holistic solution that accounts for the needs of the entire supply chain and innovative solutions like these allow iHub to constantly stay ahead of the competition.

Adoption of Design No. 16: Use Design Internally, Not Just Externally

Apply design to the employee experience, because what is experienced internally will reinforce what is created externally.

While iHub constantly looks to solve problems based on a holistic understanding of the situation, they do not just do this for their

Seeing the employee experience as a crucial aspect of business shapes how iHub interacts with their customers.

clients. Founder and Managing Director of iHub, Koh San Joo, brings that same attitude to the boardroom when reviewing iHub's internal processes. Mr Koh takes care to curate the employee experience as much as a customer's.

For example, Mr Koh wanted his staff to take more initiative to find ways to improve efficiency. Mr Koh understood that staff relied on overtime (OT) pay to supplement their monthly income. However, OT pay was disincentivising iHub drivers from being more efficient – the longer they took to make deliveries, the more OT they could get.

Mr Koh then raised his employees' base salary and paid variable bonuses so that staff need not depend on OT for their livelihood. This allowed his staff to still receive the same amount of money while removing the financial incentives for them to work longer hours, additionally ensuring that they have a good work-life balance. By understanding his staff's needs, he managed to implement a simple solution for them to engage more in process improvements.

Seeing the employee experience as a crucial aspect of business shapes how iHub interacts with their customers. For example, some customers might cause more problems than they are worth – always complaining about service or being abusive to staff. Ms Tan said taking on such clients goes against everything iHub believes in. *"We call that stupid money. Because the money earned will cause you sickness instead of bringing you greater prosperity,"* she said.

As a logistics solutions provider, iHub prides itself on its efficiency. Efficiency does not only

mean more deliveries, it also means taking on work that is as profitable as possible. Difficult customers who require more customer service resources, more drivers or more hand-holding, might simply be more trouble than their business is worth. *"You definitely don't want to earn that twenty per cent after taking up eighty per cent of your resources,"* Ms Tan added.

This commitment to designing better experiences for employees is not just philosophical but physical too. Mr Koh shared that he felt the interior design of his logistics company should be as good as any bank's. And beyond interior design, his staff need to feel valued. Even though driving may not be the most glamorous profession, Mr Koh believes his staff need to look good in order to feel good about their work. *"My father was like that; people looked down on him. I wanted to raise my staff's professionalism, make them look good. How do I do it? I give them vehicles that are new, nice uniforms to wear and smart tablets to do their work,"* Mr Koh said.

Adoption of Design No. 17: Empower Employees with Autonomy to Meet Users' Needs

Within set goals and constraints, delegate decision-making authority to the lowest possible level to better meet stakeholders' needs.

Making staff feel valued is more than a nice leadership philosophy at iHub, the concept seeps into every level of the firm's operations. Valued staff should not feel like they are incapable of making decisions in their jobs, and this is why iHub grants autonomy to its staff to handle situations as they deem fit.



For example, every Customer Service Officer (CSO) is given the freedom to fully handle every aspect of their customer's iHub experience. While working closely with warehousing and transport departments, officers can make arrangements that balance the needs of their customers with the needs of the firm. CSOs do not need to constantly check with management or spend precious man hours waiting for confirmation. Instead, they can contact warehouse or transport teams directly and find immediate solutions for their customers.

Another example of empowering employees is iHub's willingness to invest in their employees' ideas. A member of the operations team, who identified himself as Ah Tan, said that when he first joined iHub, he realised that inventory was being manually checked. Only one week into his job at iHub, he suggested implementing an IT system to track and scan items automatically. He got verbal approval immediately, and within another week, the system was installed and in operation.

These examples of providing staff with autonomy are a key aspect of iHub's management philosophy. By empowering employees to act

in the best interests of the company and their users, employees have a far greater sense of ownership and pride in the company's work. Meanwhile, employees have a keen sense of what is happening at the ground level. Allowing them to make operational changes can result in more efficient systems and better service provided to iHub's customers.

Conclusion

At iHub, design comes in unique forms. As a logistics solutions provider, the firm might seem like it has few opportunities to incorporate design into its day-to-day operations. Through a progressive and design-centric management philosophy, however, iHub managed to elevate itself to its current position as one of Singapore's leading logistics providers. Instead of constantly reminding employees to boost their efficiency in order to improve customers' experience, iHub's management empowers its employees when handling individual clients' needs. This results in a cohesive work environment, where staff of every level are treated as valuable members of a team that designs and delivers the ultimate customer experience.



Johnson & Johnson

Aligning Values and Purpose



Background

Founded over 100 years ago in the United States, Johnson & Johnson (J&J) needs no introduction. The healthcare giant has more than 250 subsidiary companies, with 130,000 staff scattered globally. J&J sells consumer health products, medical devices and pharmaceutical products in at least 175 countries.

For an MNC, maintaining a singular, global culture might seem impossible. To the management of J&J, however, culture is regarded as a crucial part of their business operations. The company maintains its corporate culture through an employee guide called “the Credo”. Employees refer to the Credo in their decision-making process and this gives J&J’s management the confidence in their global teams to carry out decentralised decision-making. Regional or national heads, who have already shown a thorough understanding of the company’s values, are trusted to make decisions in real time. This allows J&J companies to remain quick and agile like start-ups, while maintaining the network and resources of a global conglomerate.

Visionary Leadership No. 1: **Rally Around a User-Centric Vision**

Set a user-centric vision beyond just KPIs that inspires a greater purpose and common direction.

J&J’s Credo was written by General Robert Wood Johnson, whose father founded the company. Written in 1943, the Credo enshrines

We believe our first responsibility is to the patients, doctors and nurses, to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services.

J&J’s commitment to value people over profits, and details the organisation’s responsibilities – to consumers, employees, communities and shareholders, in that order.

The Credo is treated as a living document. It is periodically updated to reflect global cultural shifts, like environmental awareness, encouraging work-life balance, and committing to diversity and inclusion. The latest update, which took place in 2018, was led by CEO Alex Gorsky. Staff around the world were included in the process, with workshops, surveys and focus groups organised to gather feedback on how the Credo affects their day-to-day work.

All new J&J recruits are presented a copy of the Credo on their first day. Translated into 35 languages, the Credo has pride of place in 800 J&J buildings globally. Never just some words on the wall, the Credo is repeatedly brought up in meetings, while all major company gatherings begin and end with it. It is treated as a J&J employee’s guide to decision-making.

The first line of the Credo crystallises J&J’s commitment to user centricity: “We believe our

first responsibility is to the patients, doctors and nurses, to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services.”

Inspirational Leadership No. 7:
Hunt for and Celebrate Design in Action
Be intentional to find and tell stories that reinforce design.

Having a user-centric vision does not always mean that employees can resonate with it, or that they are automatically aligned to its purpose. Employees have to relate to it on a personal level. To achieve this, J&J reinforces the Credo by celebrating and recognising stories of the Credo’s impact in the world.

J&J employs an in-house Chief Historian, whose job is to curate stories and exhibitions to showcase how the organisation has expressed user centricity over the years. They have built a physical museum in their headquarters in New Jersey to showcase their heritage of Credo-centric innovation. Their website has an entire section dedicated to showcasing anecdotes from employees, doctors and patients who have been positively impacted by J&J’s work.



The leadership team also curates and shares stories of the Credo in action, taking time in town halls and other organisational events to allow employees to share stories of how they have experienced the Credo. Management believes that continuing to celebrate J&J's values in action is the best way to propagate user centricity on a corporate scale.

One such story is when J&J was researching vaccines for COVID-19, they had a few options to choose from. Each potential vaccine had its own potential risks. To choose which one proceeds to the next stage of research and development, the management decided based on the vaccine that would be able to serve as many people as possible and as fast as possible, in line with their Credo.

"Our goal all along has been to create a simple, effective solution for the largest number of people possible, and to have maximum impact to help end the pandemic," said Mr Gorsky.

Design as Identity No. 11: **Embed Design in Your Values and People Practices**

Make organisational and people decisions based on design values.

The second paragraph of J&J's Credo details the organisation's responsibility to employees. The company does not take this responsibility lightly, and provides progressive benefits such as pet insurance and universal parental leave for adoptive parents. J&J also aspires to have the world's healthiest workforce, and has a specially designed Energy for Performance programme to help employees learn how to manage their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health.

Employees are consistently guided towards relating to their patients better, with opportunities to engage with patients directly.

Vice President and Head of HR, J&J Enterprises Asia Pacific, Lisa Tay, said that she creates

opportunities for back-end staff to realise the impact of their work through community meetings. A few years ago, they brought in a multiple myeloma patient who shared his journey of recovery with the HR team. He ended the presentation by giving them a pill that J&J produced, and thanking them for the work they do in HR that enabled the organisation to deliver a cure for his survival. Another year, they brought in a patient who had undergone two hip surgeries to perform a salsa dance. She also thanked the staff for contributing to her new quality of life.

J&J's values are also represented in their people practices in more formal ways, such as their talent management and recruitment policies. The Credo is always considered when making personnel decisions, and staff who do not seem fully on board with the Credo's values may be let go, despite their performance.

When evaluating employee performance, HR considers the individual, as well as the individual's achievements. No employee gets promoted without showing a close connection to the values laid out in the Credo. To J&J's management, the Credo comes to life through their employees. By rewarding and

encouraging employees that best embody the Credo, J&J ensures it is more than just a set of rules.

Conclusion

Despite being a 132-year-old global conglomerate, J&J's management still sees themselves as managers of a start-up. They believe decentralised decision-making is essential for maintaining agility and speed in reacting to rapidly changing market conditions worldwide.

For a large organisation, this is possible when every employee is unified in a corporate identity, shares the same set of values and works towards the same goals. J&J ensures that their vision is user-centred, relevant and constantly communicated to employees. These values are woven into the organisation's identity through strong narratives that are widely shared, and related to the employee through their policies, structures and engagements. There is then a central unifying culture that employees can resonate with, ensuring that each of them can make decisions that are in line with the organisation's values, in turn allowing J&J to react quickly and effectively to the needs of local users.

Employees are consistently guided towards relating to their patients better, with opportunities to engage with patients directly.

National Library Board

Engaging Communities in Collective Ownership



Background

In the past decade we have seen online bookstore Amazon's meteoric rise, while physical bookstores like MPH, Borders or Kinokuniya have been forced to shutter their stores or downsize to save costs.

This was the growing challenge that the National Library Board (NLB) faced back in 2015 – how to stay relevant in an increasingly digital world. NLB's leaders needed to evaluate how they could continue to serve the communities they were embedded in. Each public library had to be moulded into a space that is more than just a well-organised public storehouse for books. It had to be a focal point for communal gatherings and knowledge sharing in the neighbourhood. To achieve these grand objectives, NLB's management focused on design and understanding their users better.

Establishing this sense of belonging in the community required the NLB's leadership team to redesign both their internal and external processes. Beyond their services and amenities, they knew they had to transform internally so that staff would have greater ownership of their work and work environment. The management team set about building an organisational culture where staff take ownership of the customer experience, and convey that sense of belonging to their users.

Design as Identity No. 14: Systematically Advocate the Voice of the User

Put processes in place to ensure that the user is consistently represented in discussions and decision-making.

The process of redesigning Singapore's public libraries started with a study of the external

Beyond their services and amenities, they knew they had to transform internally so that staff would have greater ownership of their work and work environment.

environment, to better meet the current needs of their users. With NLB's focus on nurturing communities of learning, digital solutions were sought to create online platforms for collaborative learning and exploration. The leadership team also looked into involving communities through partnerships, volunteer programmes and other initiatives that built on the principles of co-creation and co-ownership.

One of the first libraries to undergo this transformation was the library@chinatown. NLB approached the redesign of this library by seeking input from various sources within the community. They partnered with grassroots organisations in Chinatown to better understand the community, and also worked with experts of Chinese culture to curate the library's selections. By combining expert opinions and data collected directly from users, NLB successfully narrowed down the profile of users that most frequently visited the library.

They discovered that working adults made up a large majority of the library's users, and consulted with them to understand how the library could best meet their needs. NLB found that encouraging their children to read in Chinese was important to this group, so they included an extensive children's section

at library@chinatown despite its small size. Through consultations, NLB also realised that it could try out a volunteer-run model without the traditional counter to encourage patrons to perform self-help services.

However, the importance of representing the user's voice is not just in the initial process of redesign. The library@chinatown continues to involve users in refining their daily operations. In fact, the entire library is fully run by volunteers, including planning and supporting events, running programmes like storytelling and crafts for children, customer service, collection maintenance, and recruitment and training. NLB ensures that the voice of the user is always represented and fosters a unique relationship of co-managing the library with its users.

Adoption of Design No. 17: Empower Employees with Autonomy to Meet Users' Needs

Within set goals and constraints, delegate decision-making authority to the lowest possible level to better meet stakeholders' needs.

Creating this sense of belonging was not just applied to NLB's external users. Internally, processes were redesigned to create a greater sense of ownership for NLB's staff, empowering

NLB ensures that the voice of the user is always represented and fosters a unique relationship of co-managing the library with its users.

them to make decisions and involving them in the design process.

In the redesign process of the different public libraries, every branch's staff were individually consulted about their library's layout. Even simple details like where the printer should be and how the desks are arranged were decided in tandem with the staff. In an organisation-wide job redesign, staff were asked how they felt their work could be improved to add more value. The entire process of redesigning job roles was a collaborative effort with staff, so that each individual would feel more empowered in their new job scope – which they had a part in defining.

Additionally, NLB's Public Library Officers are given the freedom to determine how to best serve their users. Instead of being bogged down by red tape, staff have freedom to implement solutions based on problems they observe or feedback they receive.

For example, the general policy for quick charging stations in the library is not to provide seating. The purpose of the policy is so that users do not end up sitting at the charging stations for long periods of time and hog these stations. However, in the library@harbourfront, the staff realised that many of their users would end up sitting on the floor instead, and there were quite a number of elderly users using these stations. Hence, they placed a bench at the station. Instead of having to submit a proposal to HQ for approval for such a simple decision, NLB staff are allowed to do

what they feel is best immediately. Even simple acts like having a bench for senior citizens, gives staff the confidence that they own the space they work in.

The fact that staff are given the autonomy to make these changes without lengthy approval processes contributes to giving NLB workers a sense of agency and control, increasing their feeling of ownership and belonging in their work. These improvements are also shared with other branches through "iYAY" emails, so that staff know that their ideas are making an impact not just in their own branch, but in libraries across the nation.

Relational Leadership No. 9: Invite Input and Respond Actively

Beyond just collecting feedback from staff, acting on the feedback is necessary to reinforce staff's openness to share in future.

Apart from co-creating and empowering staff to own their work, NLB's leadership team also regularly involves the staff in organisation-wide initiatives and projects. Catherine Lau, Assistant Chief Executive, Archives and Libraries Group, chairs a weekly half-day meeting called "the huddle", together with three other directors.

These huddles serve as a platform for library staff to pitch larger-scale ideas and initiatives for the library. These can range from website improvements to new frameworks for community engagement to programmes that



engage specific interest groups. NLB's leadership team encourages their staff to share their inputs freely by framing these huddles as co-creation sessions rather than reviews. Staff are not expected to come with perfect answers. Instead, they are encouraged to share ideas so that the leaders can provide feedback and collaborate with them to turn the ideas into reality.

The huddle is an ongoing design process driven by NLB staff, who then form cross-departmental teams that can conduct further research or help to fill in the gaps. Staff will then come back to share these projects with the leadership team, which supports them by allocating resources, providing feedback or pointing them in the right direction. "Sometimes some ideas are really quite crazy and some just take a certain tried and tested path. It doesn't matter. It comes in all forms. And then we just help to add value to it," Ms Lau said.

Over a hundred projects are discussed and launched from these huddles every year. By actively participating in the cycle of iteration with the staff, NLB's leadership team helps to perpetuate their staff's involvement in the

organisation's strategy. Showing that they are willing to support and give input to staff ideas helps to strengthen their staff's willingness to participate in these initiatives. The leadership team reinforces the belief that each staff can make an impact to the organisation, further solidifying their sense of belonging and ownership within NLB.

Conclusion

As NLB re-evaluated their position in today's society, they refocused their efforts to building communities centred around the public libraries. To achieve this, they started nurturing communities among their staff. NLB employed various models to strengthen the relationship between the libraries and their users, and ensure that their users' needs are continually being represented. At the same time, they took a new approach to their internal processes that reinforced this sense of belonging within the organisation, and to embed ownership and initiative into their culture. By taking this approach, NLB has managed to remain relevant to the communities they serve.



Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Enabling a Culture of Empathy



Background

One of Singapore's 16 public hospitals, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) serves the needs of 1.4 million people in Central Singapore. To best serve a rapidly ageing population with ever-evolving healthcare needs, it is vital for healthcare providers to constantly develop new solutions. TTSH has been one of the leaders in the field of healthcare innovation, pioneering award-winning projects such as the "C3 Smart Hospital for the FUTURE", a smart hospital operating system that provides real-time information of hospital resources. It allows hospitals to manage bed capacity, laboratory testing capabilities and manpower resources amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In May 2019, the Ng Teng Fong Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI) was opened by then-Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong. The 25,000sqm complex is Singapore's largest purpose-built healthcare innovation centre with a network of 37 partners from Singapore and around the world. To facilitate cross-organisation access to information, CHI hosts the CHI Learning and Development (CHILD) System funded by the Ministry of Health and backed by CHI's network of partners. CHILD enables healthcare professionals and partners to research, initiate conversations and form communities of practice to actively ask, share and build on the collective knowledge and experiences. The CHI Living Lab (CHILL) contributes to CHILD for the community of innovators to grow from strength to strength.

The healthcare provider's efforts in supporting design-led innovations are spearheaded by David Dhevarajulu and Lynette Ong, the Executive Director of CHI and the Director of Transformation Office at TTSH respectively. Apart from investing in innovation facilities and external collaborations, TTSH's success in being design-led comes from an intense focus on incorporating design into the organisational culture. This ensures that the whole organisation of 10,000 staff can sustain continuous user-centric innovation.

TTSH's management works closely to uphold the organisation's ongoing commitment to promoting design.

Visionary Leadership No. 2: **Align Leaders to Champion and Sponsor Design**

Get buy-in from senior leaders for greater ownership of the vision to leverage design.

TTSH's management works closely to uphold the organisation's ongoing commitment to promoting design. This was not always the case though. When Mr Dhevarajulu started his career at TTSH, all strategic planning fell solely under the HR department. Over the course of his career, Mr Dhevarajulu has overseen the transition to involve the entire senior management team and the Board in this area.

"Today, we have something called The Workforce Council (TWC). TWC is chaired by our CEO and comprises senior members from HR, People Development, Transformation and family group chiefs," Mr Dhevarajulu said. TWC proactively looks into the forward planning of workforce transformation through design, starting with care and process redesign to meet users' needs, augmenting with technology to improve efficiency where relevant, and creating the opportunities for staff to do their work better.

The way TTSH structures their divisions has also changed, and each unit now has a quality champion, whose role is to advocate continuous improvement and innovation, be it in capability building or coaching of projects. The quality champions are supported by the improvement and innovation practitioners who will look at the application of the appropriate methodologies, including design, for the problems at hand.

These quality champions sit on a cross-functional quality council, which is a platform for senior leaders to gather and discuss subjects around innovation and improvement, to ensure a unified voice advocating user-centric design throughout every department in the hospital.

All projects in TTSH are led by a project owner and a project sponsor, with the owner being the process owner and the sponsor normally being a Head of Department (HOD) or senior management member. While all decisions that affect the project go through the project owner, senior management is able to influence the outcomes of projects through their close relationships with each other. "At every level, all the division heads, we must be kakis with one another. All HODs must be good friends. If there's ever some issue and there's a need to make a call, just make the call, because you're calling a friend," Ms Ong said.

Inspirational Leadership No. 5: **Connect Directly with Users**

Be directly involved in understanding internal and external users.

With improving the patient experience the sole focus of the entire organisation, it is imperative for the management to remain directly in touch with both internal and external users. This means TTSH leaders need to have vivid personal understandings of the experiences of doctors, nurses, patients and ancillary staff alike. They can then refine internal processes and improve the overall user experience for all.



In an experiment conducted in early 2012, Mr Dhevarajulu and his team sat outside a doctor's consultation room for a day to observe his practice. By drawing a map of the doctor's process, the team was able to rearrange the doctor's office while the doctor went home for the night. *"When the doctor came in, he looked at the place and said, 'Why is my place so different?'. We just told him to just do what he needs to do. At the end of the day, he came out and said, 'What did you guys do? It was so easy! I had everything I needed within my reach,'"* Mr Dhevarajulu shared.

This process of getting first-hand understanding of ground realities and making improvements is regularly applied in the management walkabouts. The senior management team will go to various departments to speak with the managers, supervisors and staff. The purpose is to get a better understanding of the difficulties they face and the support they need. Ms Ong shared the philosophy behind this process, saying, *"Don't just base it on statistics to know what's wrong. Go down and see how are our staff doing and working? How are our patients responding to the care we deliver? Are our processes based on what we think or what is really happening?"*

Ms Ong also shared that this philosophy is applied to inter-agency projects. When encouraging patients with renal problems to do dialysis at home, it was observed that there was a low take-up rate nationally, despite patients being provided with training. To investigate the issue, the Ministry of Health commissioned the TTSH Kaizen Office (within the ambit of the Transformation Office) to understand the entire patient's experience. They sat in during consultations with the patients' dieticians to hear first-hand how dietary advice was being dispensed, and even went to the patients' homes to get a clear idea of how most homes were set up.

Through these observational studies, they realised that there were gaps between how patients were trained and what could realistically be applied at home. For example, hand hygiene is an important practice for home dialysis. This was easier to practise in the hospital training environment versus at home as the sink is often not by the patient's bedside. They also realised that the way dietary advice was dispensed to patients was overwhelming, making it hard for them to remember and adhere to the instructions. This helped the project team to better understand where the real needs were, and to set plans in motion to meet those needs.

As an organisation, TTSH is committed to championing design-led innovation.

Relational Leadership No. 9: Invite Input and Respond Actively

Beyond just collecting feedback from staff, acting on the feedback is necessary to reinforce staff's openness to share in future.

Maintaining management's vivid understanding of processes on the ground is only possible through TTSH's constant collection of user feedback from both staff and patients. Beyond the simple act of collecting feedback, the management is also proactive in its response. Staff are then encouraged to provide honest feedback when they observe the management taking it on to improve the organisation's operations. TTSH management initially ritualised the process of collecting feedback from their staff through the "Grandfather Wall", but it has since evolved into an organisation-wide feedback programme called "Voices 8000".

The Grandfather Wall was first conceptualised as a way for staff to give feedback anonymously. It was simply a large notice board that anyone could post feedback notes on, and there were no cameras or ways to track who wrote which note. But this was more than an ornamental feedback collection method. According to Mr Dhevarajulu, comments left on the wall would be regularly addressed by the CEO at the town hall meetings. Such is CEO Eugene Soh's commitment to hearing staff feedback and reacting to it, that he replaced the Grandfather Wall with a more comprehensive feedback programme – Voices 8000.

Through this initiative, Dr Soh hopes to have a 45-minute conversation with each staff member. *"When Dr Soh said that, we thought he was joking. We thought 8000 was a metaphor. He said, 'No, 8000 is not a metaphor. I want to talk to 8000 staff,'"* Mr Dhevarajulu said. Through the Voices 8000 initiative, staff of any rank in the organisation can give feedback to the CEO directly.

By treating staff feedback with the same urgency as patient feedback, Mr Dhevarajulu and his team were able to map out the common themes in order to rectify them as efficiently as possible. Over time, the Voices 8000 initiative became a resounding success, with more and more staff members from every level of TTSH's operations having the confidence to speak up and be heard.

The fact that staff could see the impact of their feedback also encouraged them to speak openly and honestly. *"The early conversation was 'I don't have enough lockers. Can we have more carpark lots? Can we increase the numbers in our childcare centre?' When they saw that all those needs were addressed, they became braver."*

Groups have also had to expand from the initial size of 12 to 15 people to massive meetings of 90 staff at once, while the time allocated to each meeting has been doubled to 90 minutes. Dr Soh continues to uphold his end of the bargain, attending all meetings, and being the only senior management member to individually attend every group's discussion.

Conclusion

As an organisation, TTSH is committed to championing design-led innovation. They have inculcated this attitude into their culture by creating structures to ensure that leaders have a unified voice in advocating design. TTSH's management team also collects feedback first-hand and ensures that feedback is promptly acted upon. This culture forms the core of the organisation's movement in user-centric design, allowing them to stay on top of the evolving needs of their 1.4 million patients.

DesignSingapore Council

The DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) vision is for Singapore to be an innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design by 2025. As the national agency that promotes design, our mission is to develop the design sector, help Singapore use design for innovation and growth, and make life better in this UNESCO Creative City of Design. Dsg is a subsidiary of the Singapore Economic Development Board. For more information, please visit www.designsingapore.org.

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ROHEI is a learning and consulting firm that partners organisations in building a culture of trust where people and results are honoured. ROHEI develops trusted and relationally competent leaders and helps organisations navigate the people aspect of their change journeys. For more information, please visit www.rohei.com.

Participating Companies

1 Accenture

A global consulting firm providing services in digital, cloud and security that has locations across 51 countries.

2 Aleph Labs

A digital experience company headquartered in Singapore, with operations across six other countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Australia.

3 Banyan Tree Group

A multi-branded hospitality group that includes hotels, resorts, spas, galleries, golf courses and residences. It is headquartered in Singapore, with operations across 23 countries.

4 Benjamin Barker

A menswear fashion brand with store locations in five countries – Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Cambodia and the United States of America.

5 Bynd Artisan

A retail boutique that provides personalised and customised leather and paper gifts based in Singapore.

6 Carousell

A classifieds marketplace for buying and selling new and second-hand goods, with a presence in eight markets across Southeast Asia, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

7 Changi Airport Group

The managing group of Singapore Changi Airport, a leading air hub in Asia and one of the world's most awarded airports. Changi Airport Group performs the key functions of airport operations and management, air hub development, retail and commercial activities, infrastructure development and airport emergency services.

8 Cityneon

A global entertainment company headquartered in Singapore, that creates highly anticipated experiences for visitors all around the world.

9 Commune/Koda

A Singapore-based boutique furniture design and lifestyle company.

10 DBS

A multinational banking and financial services group headquartered in Singapore, with operations across 18 markets.

11 Government Technology Agency of Singapore

A statutory board of the Singapore Government responsible for the delivery of the government's digital services to the public. It is the implementing agency of the Prime Minister's Office's "Smart Nation and Digital Government Office".

12 Grab

A Singapore-based technology company offering ride-hailing transport services, food delivery and payment solutions. Currently present in eight countries across the region – Singapore, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

13 Great Eastern

A well-established and trusted insurance brand in Singapore and Malaysia; also operating in Indonesia, Brunei and has a presence in China, as well as a representative office in Myanmar.

14 HOPE Technik

A Singapore-based engineering firm that has been evolving the industry landscape with its technological innovations since 2006.

15 Huge

A digital service consulting firm headquartered in Brooklyn with offices worldwide.

16 IBM iX

A digital and design consultancy, headquartered in Armonk, New York, with nearly 60 studios around the world.

17 iHub Solutions

A smart warehouse and logistics services provider headquartered in Singapore, with presence in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand too.

18 Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore

A statutory board of the Singapore Government that provides services in the administration of taxes.

19 Johnson & Johnson

A multinational healthcare company headquartered in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with operations in more than 60 countries.

20 Lo & Behold

A Singapore-based hospitality company that creates and operates innovative hospitality concepts in unique locations across Singapore.

21 LUXASIA

A leading omnichannel partner for luxury beauty and lifestyle brands distribution, retail and e-commerce in the Asia Pacific with presence in 14 countries in the region.

22 Mandai Wildlife Group

Mandai Wildlife Group is the steward of Mandai Wildlife Reserve, a unique wildlife and nature destination in Singapore, home to Singapore Zoo, River Wonders and Night Safari – with two new wildlife parks, an eco-friendly resort and more nature-based experiences to come.

23 National Library Board

A government agency under the Ministry of Communications and Information, Singapore, that manages 27 public libraries, the National Library and the National Archives of Singapore.

24 Philips

A health technology company focusing on improving people's health by leveraging advanced technology and deep clinical and consumer insights. Headquartered in the Netherlands and located in nearly 50 countries across the globe.

25 SaladStop!

A healthy food chain headquartered in Singapore, with operations in eight other countries (the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Spain, Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia). Their aim is to become the world's leading nutrition, health and wellness company serving the best tasting and most nutritious food.

26 Salesforce

A global cloud-based software company that develops CRM (Customer Relationship Management) solutions and provides business software. It is headquartered in San Francisco, California, with operations across 27 countries.

27 Tan Tock Seng Hospital

The flagship hospital of the National Healthcare Group and one of the largest multidisciplinary hospitals in Singapore.



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