Right Design™ Exploration Model

	Vision	Strategic	Tactical
Why	Value Market Opportunity Problem Space	Importance Urgency	Meaning, Purpose Achievement Morale
	Assessment Risk		
What	**Proto-Use Cases** Potential Solution Space	**System Design** Use Cases Flows and Requirements Components and Dependencies	**Detailed Design** Prototyping Construction
	Accuracy Risk		
Who	**Key Stakeholders** Representatives of: Customer (Product Owner) Organization (Project Owner) System and Project Design (Architect)	**Abstract Team** Roles Capabilities Communication Dependencies Resource Constraints	**Concrete Team** Individuals Skills and Expertise Interpersonal Realities
	Leadership Risk		
When	Market Window Customer Requirements Business Need Competitive Pressures	**Estimations** Based on broad scales and critical path Deadlines (non-arbitrary)	**Tracking** Time Adjusting Schedules Resource Availability
	Timeliness Risk		
How Much	**Budgets** Investments Bets Other financial constraints	**Costs** Labor, Implementation (Direct, Indirect) Infrastructure Hosting Maintenance	**Tracking** Costs Adjusting Budgets
	Resource Risk		
Where	Geographic Reach Jurisdictions Market Penetration	On Premises, Edge, Cloud, Hybrid Ideal, Abstract, Preferential	Deployment, Operations Actual, Concrete, Realized
	Topology Coupling Risk		
How	Values Culture Organizational Structure	Process Priorities	Implementation Tools, Technologies, Vendors Methodologies, Patterns
	Alignment Risk		

Right Design

Summary

The Right Design™ Exploration Model provides a thinking space for technology leaders. The Model aims to:

- Increase communication and decision making **focus**
- Highlight the necessity of **risk** confrontation and mitigation
- Aid in ensuring **sufficient attention** to important details
- Help prevent allocating **excessive attention** to particular details

The model consists of three **Resolution Categories** (Vision, Strategic, Tactical), and seven **Focusing Questions**, resulting in 21 **Areas of Exploration**. Teams and leaders should seek to ensure they give adequate attention to all 21 **Areas of Exploration**. In addition, each **Focusing Question** has an associated **Risk** to be evaluated and mitigated.

Various heuristics may be used to identify areas requiring deeper exploration. For example, spending more than 5% (1 ÷ 21 = .0476) of time and effort on a particular **Area of Exploration** may imply **excessive attention** to that **Area**. Another example could be a realization that adequate documentation exists for the Strategic **Resolution Category**, but is insufficient for the Vision and/or Tactical Categories.

Any particular conversation should be narrowed to a preselected **Area of Exploration**, or a relatively small group of them. There are no stringent requirements for what determines the appropriate number of **Areas of Exploration** to include in any given conversation. However, any number beyond three or four will likely reduce the ability to focus a conversation, dampening the benefits provided by the model.

It is recommended to choose **Areas of Exploration** for a particular conversation that are in relative proximity to one another. For example, a conversation may focus on the “Who” row, across the three **Resolution Categories**. Or a conversation may involve a selection of **Focusing Questions** within the Vision Category. Other combinations may be explored and then assessed regarding their applicability to a particular situation.

Critical Considerations

The Right Design™ Exploration Model:

- Can help identify areas that are under or over explored
- Provides a mental map for conversation participants
- Aids in role clarification when making critical decisions
- Can help provide a cold splash of water when you need one
- Does not intend to dictate or strongly prescribe the details of exploration
- Does not recommend slavish adherence to recommended ratios or approaches
- Is not intended to overly constrain conversations
- Should not be wielded as a weapon in misguided attempts to prove who is “right”

It is generally recommended to start at the top-left of the model, and reserve attention to the bottom-right as long as is feasible.

In that vein, the Tactical/How **Area of Exploration** is *intentionally* represented with a light gray color. Technical discussions very often move to this **Area of Exploration** in rapid fashion. If there is one prescriptive recommendation of the model it is to *avoid the tendency to gravitate to the Tactical/How **Area of Exploration** prematurely. No really, you’re probably going there too soon!*

Applying The Model

The Right Design™ Exploration Model can be used in various stages of the software development lifecycle.

Planning Stages

During planning stages, apply the model for:

Brainstorming

In brainstorming, all ideas are received, validated, and categorized within the model. This is the one approach where all of the **Areas of Exploration** may be considered at the same time. However, it remains advisable to avoid the Tactical/How **Area of Exploration** until the last responsible moment.

Completeness Assessment

A completeness assessment involves verifying that adequate attention and detail have been given to all **Areas of Exploration** in the model, including potential **Risk** mitigations.

Down-in-the-Weeds Prevention

For an exploration at the Vision or Strategic **Resolution Categories**, the model can help refocus when participants begin to drift toward the Strategic and Tactical Resolutions prematurely.

Mid-flight Checks

Once a project is in progress, use the model for:

Alignment Assessment

Use the model to assess alignment or mis-alignment with stated goals, milestones, values, targets, etc.

Risk Assessment

Reevaluate identified risks and mitigation strategies.

Retrospectives

Once a project or phase is complete, use the model for:

Execution Assessment

How well was the project executed? Was it 100% successful? If so, why? If not, why not?

Accuracy Assessment

How accurate were the assumptions and estimations within each **Area of Exploration**?

Potential Improvements Assessment

What could we do better in the future in each of the 21 **Areas of Exploration**?

Any Time

At any stage of a project, the model may be applied for:

Focused Conversations

What problem are we trying to solve? How can we assess and address the current reality in respect to requirements, expectations and other constraints?

Closing Thoughts

The Right Design™ Exploration Model provides a thought space for comprehensive evaluation of proposed technology solutions. Ultimately, you must discover and implement what works for you and your team.