

Speaker Notes – The Five Phases of Design Thinking

Slide 1: The Five Phases of Design Thinking

Today, we're going to walk through the five core phases of Design Thinking. These phases help teams systematically approach complex challenges with empathy and creativity. While they're often shown as sequential, remember: Design Thinking is iterative. You can—and should—loop back, jump ahead, or repeat stages as needed.

Slide 2: Phase 1 – Empathize

Design begins with empathy. In this phase, the goal is to deeply understand your users' experiences, needs, and behaviors. Techniques include interviews, shadowing, and immersive observation. We're not just collecting facts—we're seeking emotional insight. This understanding becomes the foundation for everything we design.

Slide 3: Phase 2 – Define

After gathering insights, we move to Define. Here, we synthesize our findings to clearly articulate the core problem from the user's perspective. It's tempting to rush this, but a well-framed problem unlocks creativity. A great tool here is the "How might we..." question—it reframes challenges into opportunities.

Slide 4: Phase 3 – Ideate

Now it's time to generate ideas. The Ideate phase is about volume and variety. We want to go beyond the obvious—no idea is too wild. Techniques like brainstorming, SCAMPER, and mind mapping help get the creative juices flowing. This is also where diverse teams really shine—different perspectives lead to better ideas.

Slide 5: Phase 4 – Prototype

In the Prototype phase, we bring ideas to life—quickly and simply. Think of this as "building to think." We use sketches, mockups, or simple models to represent key features or workflows. The point isn't to be perfect—it's to learn, visualize, and provoke discussion.

Slide 6: Phase 5 – Test

Testing lets us learn how users interact with our prototypes. It's not just about validation—it's about discovery. Often, we find unexpected issues or opportunities during this stage. We use this feedback to refine, or sometimes revisit earlier stages. Iteration is essential—failure is fuel for learning.

Slide 7: Iterative and Non-Linear Nature

A key mindset shift: Design Thinking isn't a straight line. It's a cycle. You may ideate again after testing, or redefine your problem after prototyping. That flexibility allows you to respond to new insights and ensure the final solution truly meets user needs.

Slide 8: Summary of the Five Phases

To recap:

- Empathize to understand your users
- Define the real problem
- Ideate to explore possible solutions
- Prototype to bring your ideas to life
- Test to learn what works

Together, these phases create a powerful framework for human-centered problem-solving.

Slide 9: Thank You

Thank you for exploring the Design Thinking process with me. It's not about getting it "right" the first time—it's about staying curious, being user-focused, and improving through iteration. I encourage you to try applying these phases to a challenge in your own organization—and see what opens up.