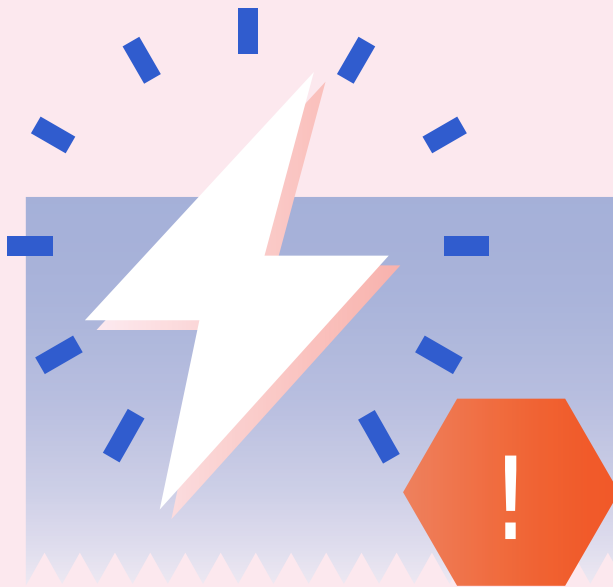


BARRIER 1

Talking the Talk Without Walking the Walk



The barrier: Organizations sometimes buy into the hype of design tools without understanding them fully , or having a depth of experience and practice to support their application.

Potential impact: Work may be “design-inspired”, but it can slide into innovation theatre and ultimately disappointment.

“Some people buy into the hype of the new tools and approaches and its excitement without substance. It also leads others to get skeptical.”

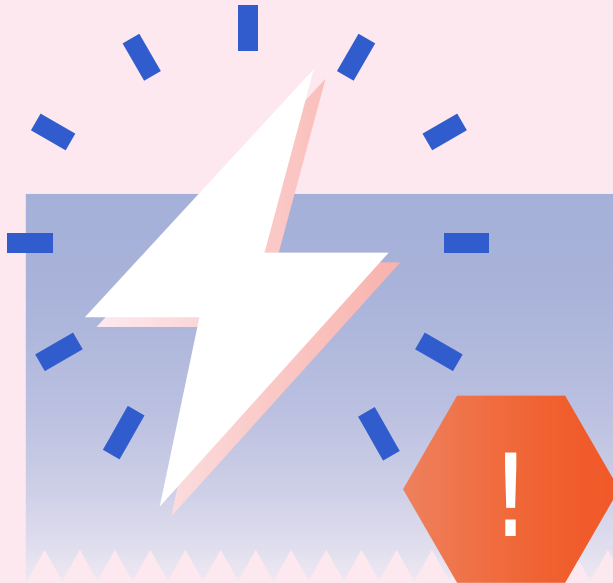
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BARRIER 2

Prime Before You Paint



The barrier: Practitioners often find that their host organizations aren't ready for their ways of working. Culture change and education become crucial.

Potential impact: They need to spend valuable time “merely” training their colleagues, and may not have a lot to show in terms of outcomes/impact.

“We’re not here to train, we’re here to do the work, but to scale we have to be able to build capacity.”

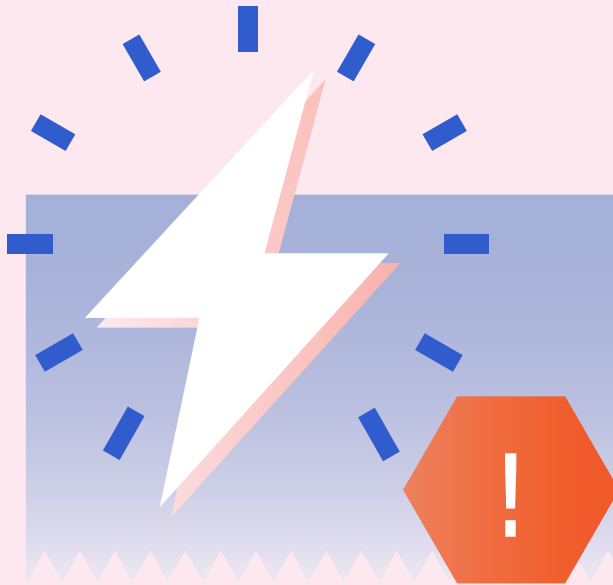
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BARRIER 3

Betrayed by the Buzz



The barrier: Buzzwords and hype can be immediately off-putting for folks who may have experienced a carousel of change/project management approaches.

Potential impact: People may be inclined to identify service design as another fad, especially if they encounter jargon.

"People are skeptical. They think that 'this is going to go away,' or 'now it's about lean.'"

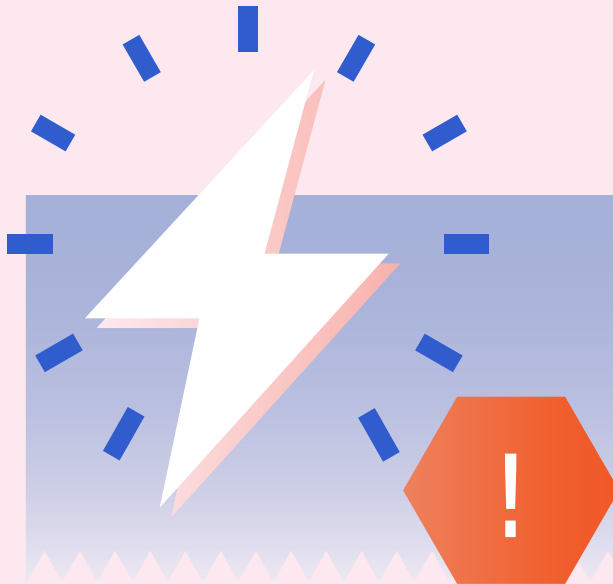
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BARRIER 4

Legacy Lock-In



The barrier: Organizations are often locked into certain ways of working, through force of habit, fear of the unknown, or leadership preference.

Potential impact: There can be a notion that what a problem requires is more money or staff, rather than a new approach.

"When people at the top have a way they like to work that tends to trickle down, like the 'important people' being paper based."

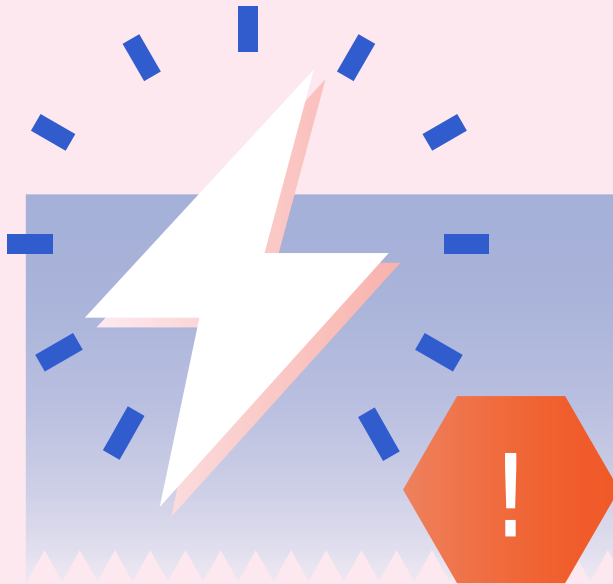
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BARRIER 5

Air-Gapped Organizations



The barrier: Whether because of policy, culture, or structure, organizations can inhibit information sharing or collaboration across internal divisions.

Potential impact: Even with top-down support and bottom-up engagement, silos can be detrimental to cross-channel design, implementation planning, and research dissemination.

"A lot of our methods try to expand the number of people to get a broader perspective — it's harder to do that operationally if we are going to work in smaller pockets."

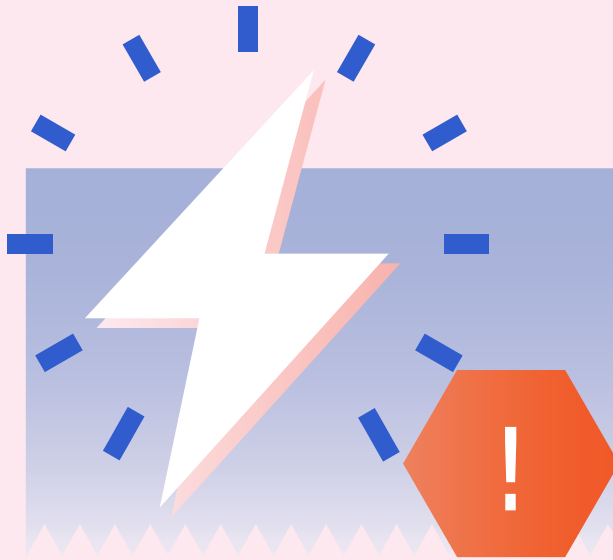
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BARRIER 6

Service Design David vs. Corporate Real Estate Goliath



The barrier: Moving furniture, putting things on the walls, and even noise levels may be restricted. Facilities management may be a cross-department corporate function or even work for the building management itself (and therefore outside of government!).

Potential impact: Failing to find adequate space may make design approaches appear awkward or unpolished with stakeholders, and outside hires may be demoralized by the rigid aesthetics of government.

"We're talking now of trying to re-org the space. There are weird barriers. For the most part the problem is the building management: there are certain rules about who can move things and how they can be moved."

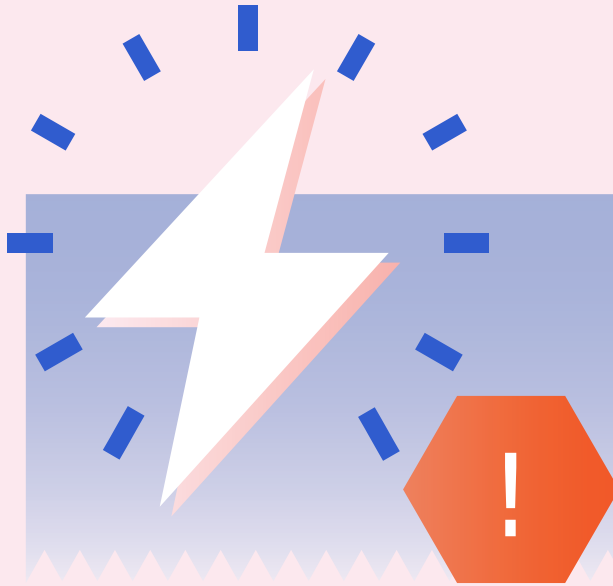
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BARRIER 7

No Time for Working Quickly



The barrier: While design approaches might reduce future repetition/failure, time spent on discovery and framing up front is often unworkable. Asking for more “present” time from decision-makers, who are used to being present for 15 or 30 minute chunks, is a non-starter.

Potential impact: Failure to secure adequate time may result in shallow processes that fail to deliver meaningful data or outcomes that depart from the usual tinkering around the edges.

“We say the ‘reframe’ is really important [in design facilitation], and we’ve never seen that happen in a single day... but we rarely get more than a single day.”

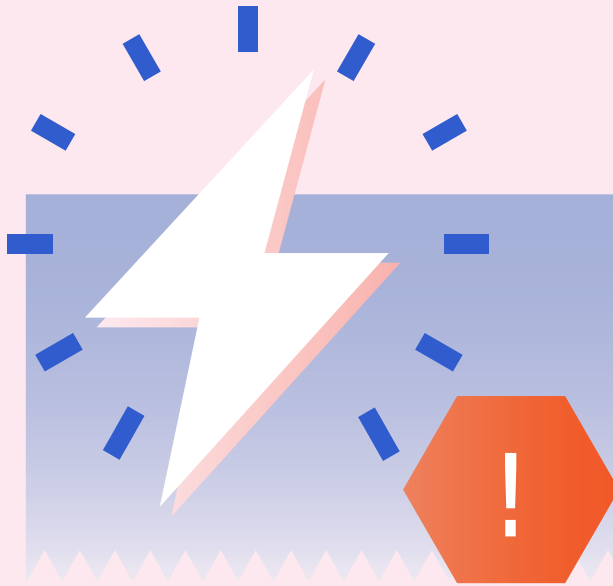
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BARRIER 8

Never Tell Me the Odds



The barrier: Government organizations often approach risk through process and rule-adhesion. They can become fixated on avoiding past risk triggers (such as press attention or public outcry) or the perception of risk, rather than the problem-specific risks that design work can surface.

Potential impact: An unbalanced relationship to risk can make it difficult to fully embrace design approaches beyond the shallow sprint or prototyping session.

"When people have a good idea, the first thing they think is 'what rule am I breaking'. It's survival."

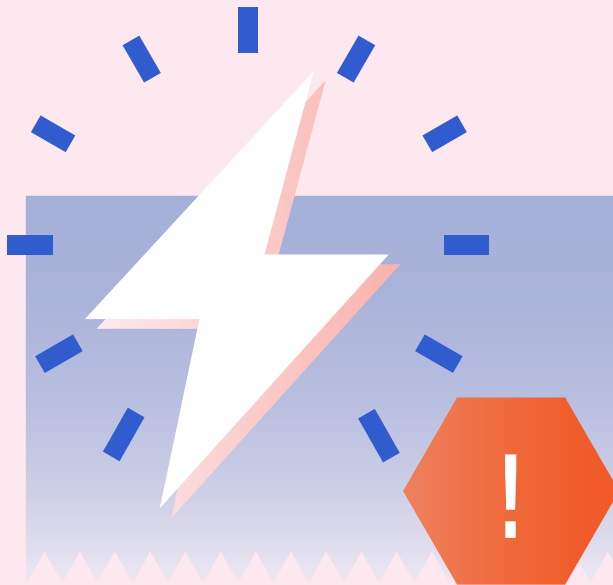
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BARRIER 9

A View from the Top



The barrier: Distance in the org chart, operational focuses, and quick turnover can expose teams to turbulence.

Potential impact: A lack of support may reduce exposure around successes, make it more challenging to carve out time, and introduce precarity and barriers to scale.

"We got work and had some impact there, but many rungs down the chain from an ADM who didn't even know what I was doing, and an Executive Director who barely understood. It was not going to be sustainable."

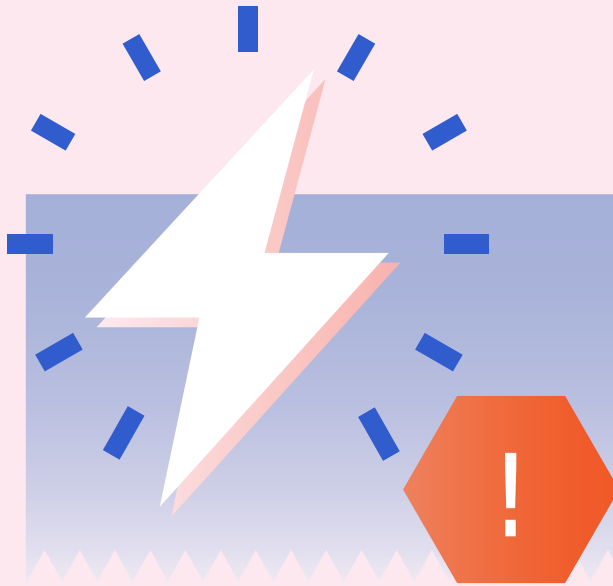
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BARRIER 10

Digitally Dated



The barrier: Organizations may have enthusiastically embraced digital transformation in recent years, but not without some growing pains, and may be hesitant to move past this hard-won cultural shift.

Potential impact: These ways of working may clash with service design methods, as they may focus on product-oriented waterfall approaches that can result in a disconnect from end user need.

"Partners see us as giving them a digital solution (not a full service approach), partly due to the Digital First strategy."

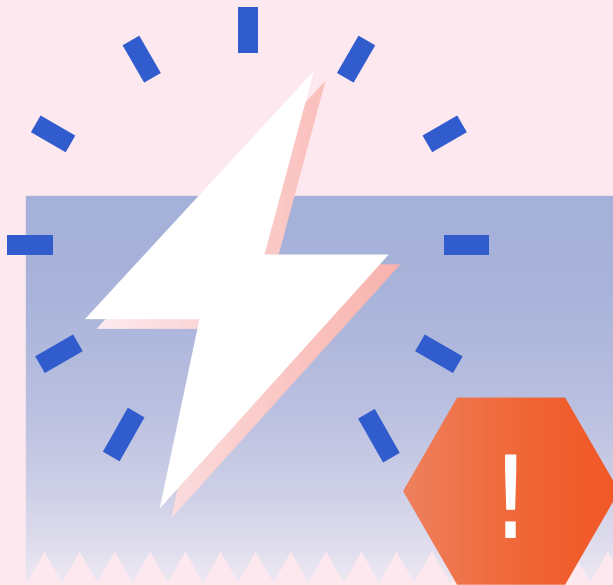
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BARRIER 11

Paperweights, Paper Waits



The barrier: Extensive paperwork, complicated governance structures, and financial constraint can hit teams hard.

Potential impact: Teams find it hard to do the kinds of things their non-government peers do easily, like attend conferences, procure vendors, and even book space for design work.

"Sometimes I have to sacrifice things because we don't have time to fill in the paperwork."

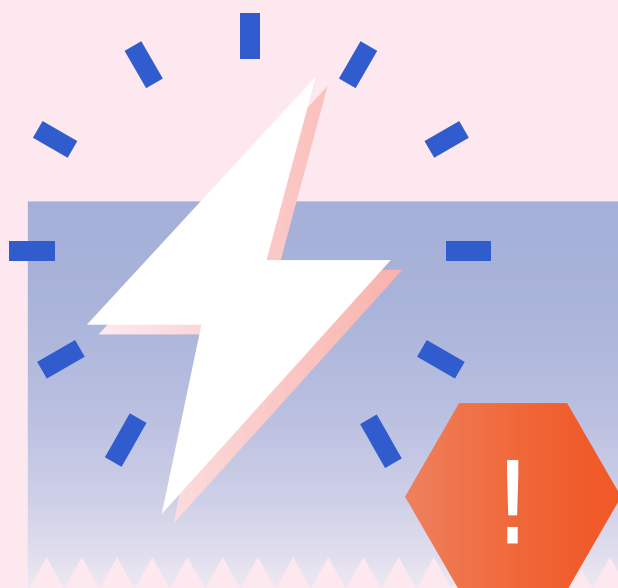
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BARRIER 12

Power to the People?



The barrier: Research with actual people is difficult due to a lack of business casing, fear of exposure, lack of understanding of the benefits, recruiting challenges with vulnerable populations, FOI, conflation of user and opinion research, and a lack of readiness to hear what the public thinks.

Potential impact: Failing to engage actual people means solutions will be shallow at best.

"I am still chasing the dream of having citizens core to the team. Part of why I am here is that people don't know that that's crazy, they just go 'oh, that's hard.' "

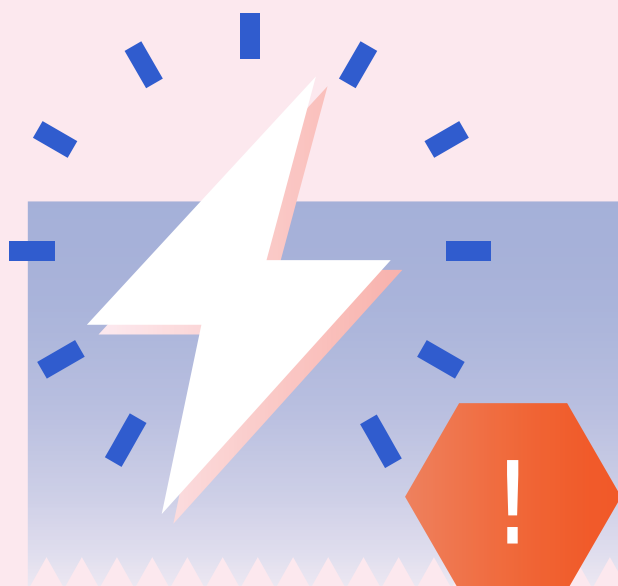
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BARRIER 13

Don't Stop Believin'... Because Service Design Is a Journey



The barrier: Selling open-ended discovery may be the biggest challenge; governments are used to projects with a clear end goal. Pre-defined outcomes, like “we’ll build you a portal”, have sometimes primed decision-makers to expect ready made, cookie cutter solutions.

Potential impact: Shallow processes, low levels of engagement, and misaligned expectations can make service design tough.

“There are a lot of processes for how money gets handed out, but you need to know exactly what the solution will be, which completely doesn’t fit with [design approaches].”

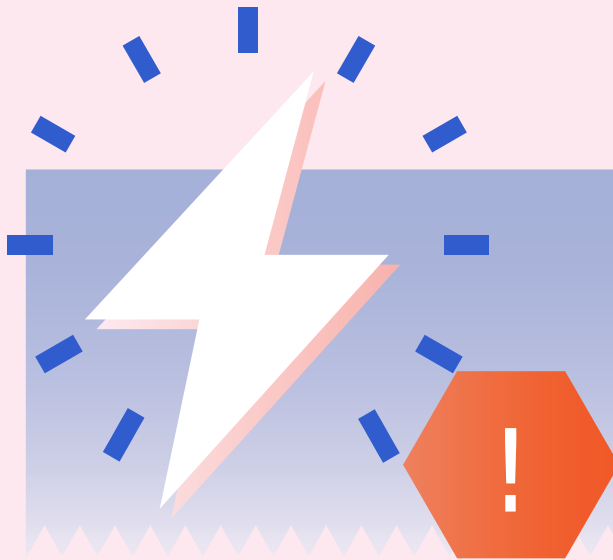
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BARRIER 14

Quicksand in Committeeland



The barrier: If service design teams allow the pace of their work to slow down, before they know it they find themselves caught up in layers of approvals and committees.

Potential impact: Slow decision-making, layers of unnecessary risk-mitigation, and the perception of taking longer than conventional processes (because in the end, you wind up working in both the old way and the new way).

"As soon as we turn our back, people go back to committee land, so we now stick around past the ideation phase into implementation."

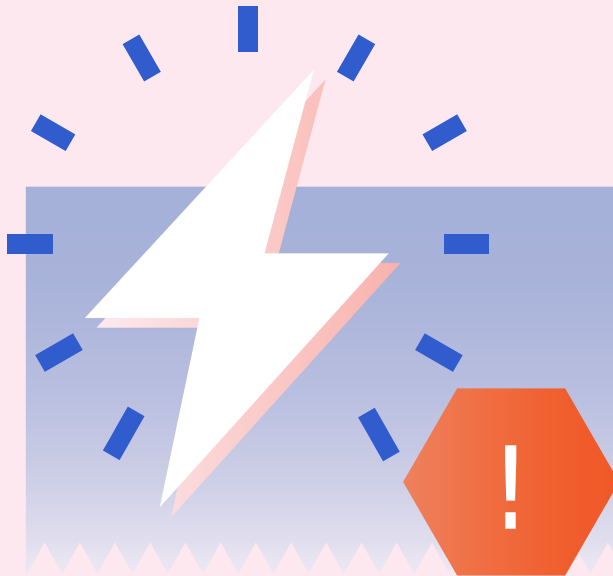
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BARRIER 15

When All You've Got Are Nails, Everything's a Hammer



The barrier: Governments are used to delivering certain kinds of products and leveraging certain skillsets to do that.

Potential impact: Designers may be used ineffectively to deliver conventional government documents (e.g., reports, briefing notes, business cases, etc.) or producing sought service design artifacts that don't provide value for the actual problem solving (e.g., persona or journey map).

"I got tasked with reviewing cabinet reports to improve them before going up the chain. If you're given something bereft, you can only make it so much better."

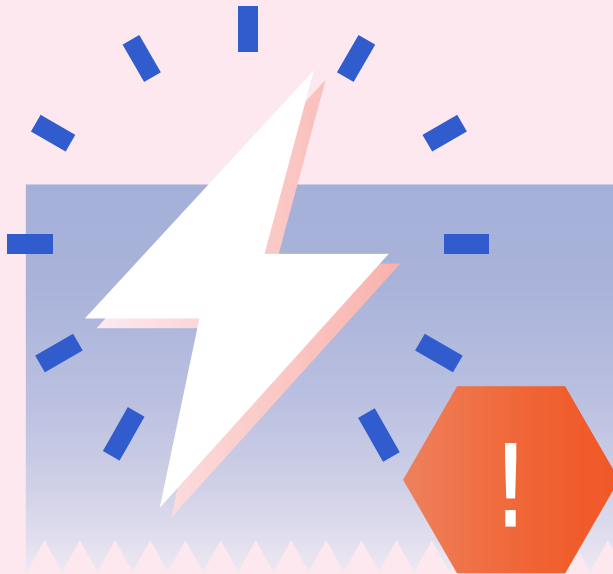
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BARRIER 16

Intrapreneurs, Extra Burdens



The barrier: Complicated budget arrangements mean that design teams need to cost-recover or prove the value of their existence. While many practitioners bring deep design skills, one participant identified that they often lack sales skills.

Potential impact: Failure to “sell”, either in the literal sense or in terms of broader awareness-building, can make it difficult to land meaningful projects and demonstrate value.

“The way our division was set up, we have a couple of areas in our division that provide services to the rest of the government but we don't have a budget. If you don't have the means then you can have all the executive ground cover you want...”

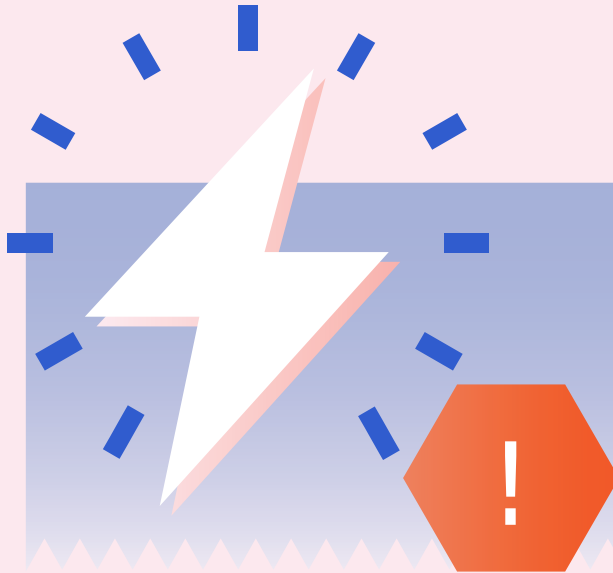
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BARRIER 17

Hook, Line, and Sinker



The barrier: Gaining and retaining talent can be challenging.

When hiring externally, cumbersome process, offputting workplace aesthetics (e.g. no Macbooks, beige cubicles, and steering committees), and fundamental mindset mismatches can prove challenging. When hiring internally, there may be an overall lack of expertise in design, or those with the expertise may be untested or too junior.

Potential impact: Teams that aren't set up for the work in terms of skillset, role fit, or working style may struggle to maintain morale.

"As someone coming from a non-government world, it's hard for me to wrap my head around what is hard for them to wrap their head around."

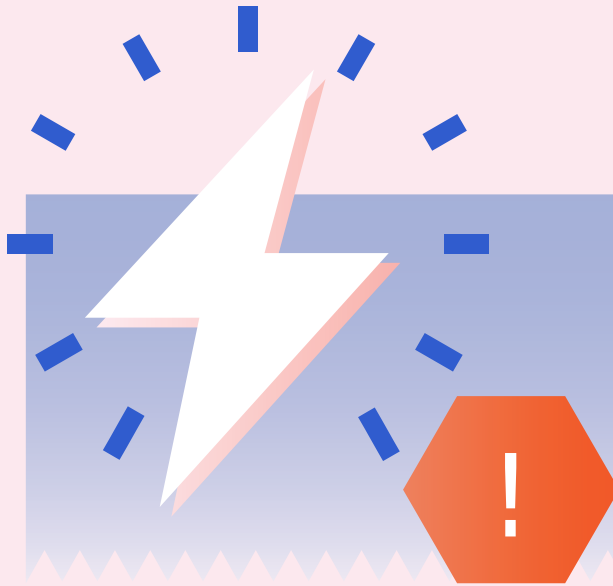
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BARRIER 18

Credibility Calamity



The barrier: Clients may ignore service design recommendations in favour of recommendations from credible legacy partners (even if those partners have led them astray in the past). Solo practitioners in particular may face more challenges building credibility.

Potential impact: A lack of credibility can make it difficult to move the work forward or tackle larger projects.

"In instances where I felt like we should not implement, partners don't always listen to what you have to say and then refer to someone that has the credibility."

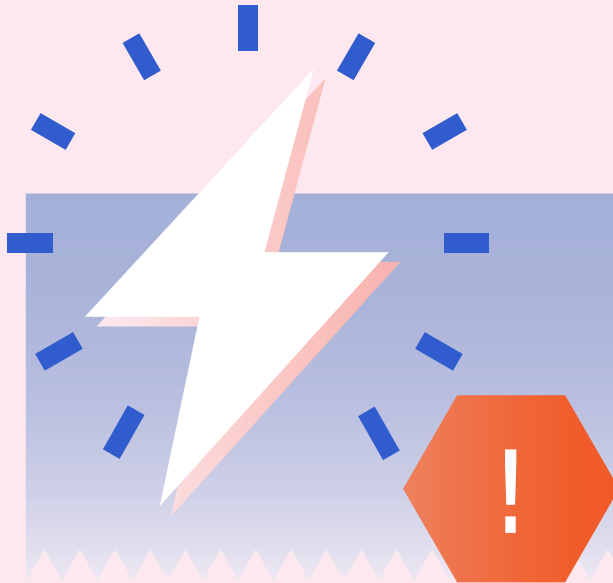
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BARRIER 19

Cult of Personality



The barrier: Service design functions sometimes come into existence because of the unflagging advocacy and energy of one person.

Potential impact: With their departure (and the unravelling of their network), the practice may not be that durable.

"A lot of this is about me, and I'm very bold. But I worry about what happens if I go away."

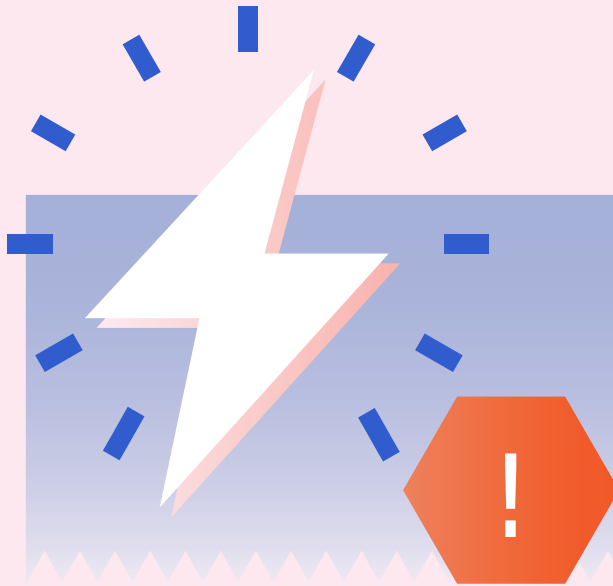
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BARRIER 20

Vive le... 9-à-5?



The barrier: Challenges can arise from the clash of cultural norms with the messiness of how service design projects often unfold, such as including the need to work beyond the end of the workday, engage in on-site collaboration, and move past rigid notions of what's "in my job description" and what isn't.

Potential impact: Friction with existing workplace culture (and contractual obligations) can cause service design work to slow down or remain shallow at best.

"My team is unionized. Most of the people around me have set work-from-home days. It can be quite challenging to coordinate."

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