



Case: How Design Thinking enabled a large multinational, multi-location organization make data seamlessly available across regions and businesses.



When was the last time you were searching for information and located it promptly? Very often, you don't have the luxury of time, to flip through an entire encyclopedia of files and folders. You want answers and you want it now, answers that is accurate, up to date and seamless.

This is a real conversation between the CTO of a large US-based Content Delivery Network company and the UBQT team leader while scoping for the project.

CTO: "Can we apply Design Thinking to solve for How can we design a search engine that will improve search performance for our internal stakeholders?"

UBQT: "You can, but do you need to? You have already decided on the solution..."

CTO: "Ok, we understand. What would you suggest then?"

UBQT: "Don't think of the solution, the output. Think of the stakeholder, their needs, interests, motivations. What would you like to solve for?"

There began the journey...



Context

All large businesses have an extensive pool of knowledge and information- whether it's their understanding of customers' needs, the learnings and experiences of employees, project documents, design and process files, strategy plans etc. And if the company has grown inorganically, through mergers and acquisitions, integrating diverse pools of talent, functions and information, the knowledge base is even more vast, and difficult to manage.

With such organisations, the challenge is in harnessing this knowledge in a coherent and productive way as to benefits all its consumers, keeping in mind seniority and security.

Background

A large multi-national Content Delivery Network organization based in Bangalore and with offices across the world was struggling with the challenge of making knowledge available to the right people at the right time in the right way. The knowledge in question is vast, collected and collated over time, by different business and people, uploaded in different systems in different parts of the world.

Today, if a manager needs to access the knowledge, she is unable to do so easily, due to problems related to access, availability and awareness.



The company currently leverages an in-house 'Search' tool to enable its employees to systematically find material and information. The organization realizes the importance and need of readily availability of knowledge to a growing employee base and expanding business, and that not getting the right search results can cost the organization.

The 'Search' platform team wanted a way to understand how it could improve the user's experience and the platform's performance. They were aware that, in spite of the platform being available, users often faced confusion with access and availability, and had to rely on informal ways to get information. This led to significant wastage of time and effort, as well as dissonance with users who often chose to bypass the Search platform entirely as a waste of their time.

To achieve this objective, 15 people representing the platform and business teams were identified to run the project using the Design Thinking methodology, facilitated and mentored by The Painted Sky team

From Discovery to Delivery

Through **a mix of classroom session and multiple mentoring interventions, over four months**, The Painted Sky Team partnered with the Client Team to Discover the real problem and opportunities, challenge conventional thinking, empathize with users and Deliver the right solution for the employees.

1. Training Programs

At the end of the 6 days of Trainings, interspersed with Mentoring, the teams had built sufficient expertise to apply Design Thinking at work to other projects, as well as mentor other colleagues on the processes, for success.

2. Mentoring Sessions

5 Mentoring sessions to augment the learnings and provide support in the project through feedback, assessments, process inputs, introduction of tools and simulations.

3. Assessment

Final presentation and assessment with business leaders on process and outcomes, with distribution of certificates.



the painted sky

The Journey

Experiential Training Programs to introduce concepts and build application expertise

DT101

- Experience Design Thinking to understand and appreciate the power and potential of Human-Centered Design.
- A simulation-based training to offer the team end-to-end understanding of the principles, processes and possibilities of Design Thinking

ELOquence

- An experiential program on Emotional Intelligence and Skill Building for Empathy research
- Learn about Unconscious and Cognitive Biases that hamper research
- Learn to Empathise (E) through better Listening (L), Observation (O) and Questioning (Q) through tools and practise

IdeaStorm

- A program to help participants learn powerful Brainstorming techniques
- Come with ideas with Creativity, Collaboration and Communication, overcoming fears and reservations
- Learn to Diverge and Converge effectively to Create and Critique

Story-Telling

- A program to help participants learn how to present their solution ideas as successful prototypes.
- Learn about audiences (stakeholders) interests and how to Pitch ideas through powerful stories that move. audiences and get impact.





Mentoring Sessions to support the teams on their journey, supporting them as they progressed through the project

Mentoring 1

•What is the Design Challenge and who are you solving for?

- At the very first mentoring session, the teams understanding of a stakeholder expanded beyond a 'Role' to a Contributor, Consumer and Keeper of the Knowledge base. Understand the problem you are trying to solve before searching for solutions was among the key take away during this session.

Mentoring 2

•What are your User Stories?

- The challenge the team expressed was to keep their bias out during the empathy interviews.
- After over three dozen interactions, they were surprised with their finding as it was far from what they had anticipated. In the process, they discovered that the challenges were multi-dimensional and complex and interconnected with multiple stakeholders.

Mentoring 3

•What is the Actionable Problem(s) that needs to be solved?

- The team at this stage were close to interpret the findings, and nail down the insights, but it didn't turn out to be that easy.
- They decided to circle back and iterate the empathy research with a new set of stakeholders. This time around they were better prepared and aimed at discovering the 'WHY' behind the users' experiences and uncover their latent needs and desires.

Mentoring 4

•What are your ideas for potential solution?

- Uncovering the insights from the research was a real struggle at this stage. After multiple iterations, the team finally nailed down scoping the problem, they wish to solve.
- The team generated ideas, tactical and strategic keeping the concerns of their stakeholders as the top priority.

Mentoring 5

•Desirable, Feasible and Viable?

- Solutions that clearly addressed pain-points and the demand of the stakeholder were the few shortlisted to take forward to build a prototype.
- Senior leader's commitment and willingness to support came as a big win for the team, during the final presentation.



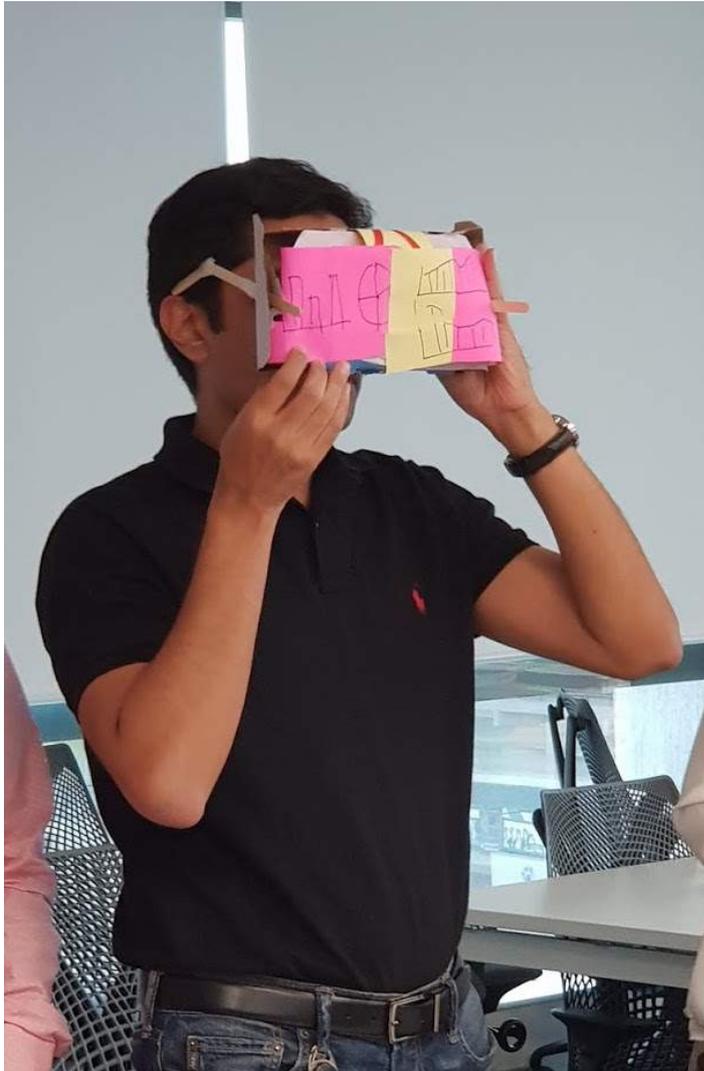
Assessment with business leaders

A 1-day Assessment with the country and technology leadership teams was conducted to present the journey and the outcomes. The prototypes were also formally tested with users, for feedback and new ideas.



Key Insights

- Key insights on company culture were discovered during research that shed light on other areas to also focus on, beyond the immediate area of data availability, that had to be considered before launching any new solution.
- In spite of having a Search engine, employees depended on informal means of sharing knowledge, and would often ask each other for information/data.
- Respondents felt that there were too many tools at play, and many were against the idea of any new ones, even when informed of their effectiveness.
- The idea to creating a multi-disciplinary team worked in providing greater access to stakeholders around the world, as well as in building credibility with business.



The Outcomes

“What I loved seeing is how the team changed in the way they started to work. The kind of questions they were asking, how they were constantly pushing to know more. Their approach, to spend time to understand the problems first before coming up with solutions is the best outcome from this project.”

- MD India & VP of Engineering

“This project helped us come up with some very powerful insights as to why our solutions were not working. We managed to figure out that just creating a solution without understanding stakeholder needs and interests, pains and joys first, doesn’t work. Stakeholders reject such solutions as they don’t apply to him, satisfy him. The new ideas we came up with not only were great in terms of technology but were also fantastic in their appeal. They worked!”

- Director, Engineering and project sponsor



Learnings & Takeaways

The Winning ideas

- New way to drive adoption that led to not just consuming knowledge, but also contributing to the knowledge base.
- Ways to make knowledge central to the business along with ease of share and access using the 'Search' Tool.
- Ideas around KOD (Knowledge on Demand), capturing user sentiments to boost results
- Product Clinic managed by Product Teams

Conclusions

The team was able to win over the **Stakeholders** ahead in the game as they saw value in what the team was trying to achieve. Stakeholder could envision the 'Wow factor' in the ideas and were eager to support and provide feedback as the participants validated the ideas with them.

The **Sponsors, Senior Leaders** asked, "*What is the next steps? How do we support you? What do you want from us?*". This said it all, as they saw desirability and appeal in the ideas.

The **Team** moved from being engineering-driven to design-driven and realized early in the project that rushing to find issues in the platform or technology is not the right approach. Instead they had to spend time to understand the experience of users and stakeholders, and that technology is only an enabler. This led to a paradigm shift in thinking and mindsets, leading to greater innovative outputs.

The iterative engagement through interviews and demos with their colleagues and global stakeholders helped the participants uncover the depth and complexity of where the issue really lies, which they wouldn't have known otherwise.

“Because designing a BETTER WAY to boil water is different from designing a better kettle”

**- Richard Perez,
Director of the Hasso Plattner d-school
University of Cape Town**

