

# Achieving Readiness for Change for Successful Implementation of Service Design Projects: Learning from Change Management

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## Abstract

The design of services is usually project based. The transition from project result to operational phase is critical, and can be seen as requiring organisational change. In service design literature however, the shift from project to practice is an underdeveloped area. While service design comes equipped with tools and methods for involving stakeholders in the design of services, other fields explicitly focus on the process of achieving organisational change. Change management is one of those. This article concentrates on the activity of "anchoring" or achieving organisational readiness for change, which here refers to the activity of grounding projects in the organisation and gaining support for it. The article asks what can be learnt by combining insights and approaches from service design literature and the field of change management.

The article first provides an overview of service design tactics relevant to achieving organisational readiness. Next, it introduces relevant concepts from the field of change management. It does that to explore how they may supplement and strengthen service design implementation. Against this background, principles for achieving organisational readiness are proposed: a) stakeholder management and involvement, b) journey over destination, and c) change from within. The article concludes that the implementation of service design projects may be treated a type of change management, and suggests that change management literature could provide resources for strengthening service design literature in the area of implementation.

***Keywords: Service Design, Anchoring, Stakeholder Involvement, Change Management, Implementation***

## 1 Introduction

70 % of all new initiatives fail (Krüger, 2010). This is perhaps particularly evident in innovation projects within the public sector, which can go over budget and scheduled time and produce average results (Holgeid & Thompson, 2011; The Telegraph, 2014; Digi.no, 2015, Sykehuspartner, 2015). Over the last years the public sector has been looking towards

the service design field for means to solve important challenges it is facing, for example associated with the on-going demographic changes (DOGA, 2014; KS, 2015). User-centred design approaches are promoted as means for making services more efficient while improving quality and the experiences of service users. The introduction of new services does however often translate to a change in the organisation, and when projects fail, it is usually due to implementation failures and not design failures (Krüger, 2010; Lin et al., 2011). The difficult part of organisational change may thus not be to develop a new organisation design, but to manage the process of implementation.

The field of service design is poorly equipped when it comes to theories on organisational development (Sangiorgi, 2011), but a substantial amount of research has been done on the topic of implementation outside of design research (Fixsen et al., 2005). One aspect seen as critical for creating organisational change is that the organisation is ready for the transformation (Armenakis & Harris, 2001). In the Norwegian context, public sector practitioners often refer to this as happening through "anchoring" activities, which involve work on building knowledge, interest and engagement among stakeholders in order to make it possible to foster change (Kommunetorget, 2015). In this article however, we use the term readiness for change (Lehman et al., 2002), more commonly used in literature.

As the success of service design projects depends on successful implementation, it is important to uncover what service designers may learn about managing change from other fields. Taking the creation of readiness for change as its starting point, this article attempts to give an overview of aspects relevant to it in the service design and the change management fields. This is done based on a review of literature from the fields of service design and change management, on the topics of readiness creation, implementation management and stakeholder involvement. Literature used in this study comes from research articles from various academic journals, textbooks, and relevant news articles.

First a presentation is given of central concepts within service design which may come to use when aiming to create readiness for change. Next, the article explains what role this has in service design, and why it is important for service designers to consider organisational readiness for their service projects. The third part provides a short introduction to change management, and an overview of principles and approaches relevant to the creation of readiness for change within the field. Finally, the article discusses similarities and differences between service design and change management when it comes to perspectives and approaches relevant to the creation of readiness for change, and the potential for cross-pollination between them. Based on that, three principles for the creation of readiness for service design projects are proposed.

## **2 Definitions**

### **2.1 Service design**

Service design is a relatively new field, still in constant evolvement (Kimbell, 2011). It has established itself as a separate design discipline, but includes elements from various other fields ranging from psychology to management (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012). There are as many definitions of service design as there are practitioners, and the definitions are often broad. In this article service design is defined as "the activity of planning and organizing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service in order to improve its quality and the interaction between service provider and customers" (SDN, 2015). This definition illustrates service design's emphasis on the user. It is however also important to ensure that the service interface is effective, efficient and distinctive from the supplier's point of view (Mager, 2004). An important characteristic of service design relates to the

intangible experiences that span over different touch points and over time (Bechmann, 2010). Services differ from products in that they are non-existing until they are used by someone. Services are seen as co-created or co-produced: customers or users participate in creating the service (Polaine et al., 2013). Examples of service design projects range from the development of a new customer service pathway with a focus on the travel experience at the "Hometown of Santa Claus" in Rovaniemi (Finland) in the summer season, to the development of an improved service for environmental waste disposal for the citizens of London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (UK) (Whicher et al., 2013).

## **2.2 Organisational readiness for change**

In the Norwegian context, the term anchoring ("forankring") is commonly used in project and development work. A dictionary definition of anchoring describes it as "providing firm basis or foundation" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). In public sector development work, the term refers to work on making sure stakeholders understand the value and importance of a process, and have an interest in it being successfully completed (Kommunetorget, 2015). In literature however, the term "organisational readiness for change" (ORC) is more commonly used, especially when talking about the management of change (Armenakis et al., 1999; Lehman et al., 2002). ORC refers to factors that may be needed but not necessarily enough to make change happen (Lehman et al., 2002).

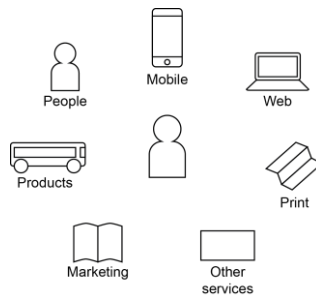
## **2.3 Stakeholders**

A stakeholder can be defined as someone who has the ability to affect a project in any way (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Karlsen, 2002). Design commonly refers to the term users, who are users of the product or service in question. Users are amongst several stakeholders involved in service design projects. Service design often refers to actors (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012), which is a broader term than users, and includes everyone who is involved in delivering or using the service, also including staff or employees from the service provider organisation. The term stakeholder is used in both management theory and service design, and includes users, customers and other actors, as well as decision makers and back office staff in the service delivering organisation. For public services, stakeholders can include service recipients, delivery agencies, their partners, ministers, other politicians, civil servants and taxpayers (Field, 2013).

# **3 The importance of readiness for change in service design**

## **3.1 The complexity of services**

To understand the complexity of services, one can compare service design to product design. In essence, product designers design for the interaction between product and user. In order to do that, designers need to understand how people will interact with the product. While product responses to input may be predictable, services are more complex and consist of different service encounters. These are interactions between people or between people and products, what is also referred to as service evidence or touch points (Kimbell, 2011).



**Figure 1. Touch points and service encounters, adapted from Polaine et al. (2013)**

In traditional product design, the deliverable of a design project is a finished product, ready for implementation. Services on the other hand, cannot be designed and delivered in the same way. Services are intangible and do not exist until they are used, since services are created in the interactions between users and service providers. Designing services is therefore not about producing an end result. Referring to Manzini, Kimbell (2011, p. 45) describes it as about designing "a platform for action with which diverse actors will engage over time". Services rely on complex and relational entities that cannot be designed or entirely pre-determined (Sangiorgi, 2011). For instance, in order to implement a new service where the front staff has to act differently towards the customers, the staff members need to change their routines before the results can be seen. This is the case in public sector projects aiming to transform health and care or social welfare services, as it was in the aforementioned service project at the Hometown of Santa Claus (Whicher et al., 2013).

Organisations or companies that deliver a service, referred to as service providers, play a big part in implementing service concepts. Management, front-line staff, etc., all have a part in delivering the service. Since the actors in the service delivery organisations are the ones actually delivering or co-creating the service (Kimbell, 2011), they need to be motivated and enabled to do so. The client or management are often decision makers in the project, and in some cases other stakeholder groups may also affect final decisions. This was the case in the example of the environmental waste disposal service mentioned earlier, where residents and front-line staff were involved in the design process (Whicher et al., 2013). Because of this, an important task of service designers is to engage multiple stakeholder groups in the process of designing services (Han, 2009).

### **3.2 Why service designers need to be concerned about readiness for change**

Designers aim to be user-centred, which means that they attempt to see the product or service from the user's point of view. The notion of empathy, "the ability to be aware of, understand and be sensitive to other people's feelings and thoughts without having had the same experience" (Battarbee et al., 2014, p. 2), is frequently used. Empathy with users is achieved through methods for data collection and analysis, and through iterative prototyping and testing. Focusing on the user experience is relevant because of the asymmetric power distribution between the user and the service delivery organisation, where the organisation is in control over resources and information, while the user decides whether or not the service is a success (Karlsen, 2002). In this context, the question is whether service designers are too focused on the user and too little on other stakeholders of critical importance to the process of service implementation: service designers are thought to excel at achieving empathy with end users and at visualising new ideas and concepts, but criticised for their poor ability to implement new solutions (Mulgan, 2014).

A design project or a project where design thinking is applied normally moves through three stages in a non-linear, iterative process: inspiration, ideation and

implementation (Brown, 2008). Implementation is where the operationalisation of designed concepts happens, and as mentioned earlier, it is a stage where much of the responsibility is placed with the organisation. While designers may do a big part of the work in the initial phases of a service design project, the organisation and the stakeholders are the ones that will eventually deliver or co-create the service. It is important to establish support for the service design concept at different levels in the organisation to enable its implementation and further development, without the help of the service designer (Barlow et al, 2006; Steen et al., 2011). To deliver a successful service, the service providers need to contribute to the creation of value and believe in the intrinsic value of the service (Leon, 2014). By involving different stakeholders and taking into account their culture, resources, routines, needs, and agendas, more sustainable solutions can be created (Boland et al., 2008; Segelstrom, 2013).

#### **4 How to create readiness for change in service design**

In service design, emphasis tends to be placed on end users, but methods for involving stakeholders in the design process do exist. They may help create readiness for the implementation of service design projects in service provider organisations. Here, we describe a selection of such methods and approaches commonly used in service design.

Co-design is an approach to involving stakeholders in service design projects. Different stakeholders are then included in the creative process, contributing to the design of concepts. This is usually done by inviting stakeholders from different organisational levels and disciplines to workshops facilitated by the designer (Blomkvist & Holmlid, 2011). There, everybody works together to create ideas. This helps to gain support for a common goal and for example unite participants in adopting a user-centric mindset (Gloppen, 2011). Allowing stakeholders to come up with ideas also creates a stronger project ownership, and thus readiness for the changes projects imply. Other benefits of using participatory design methods include improvement of learning, exchange of ideas, better communication, and cooperation between different groups (Steen et al., 2011).

Another common way of involving stakeholders is to communicate and train them in design thinking and in being user-centred. This is called expanding the organisation's design capacity (Malmberg & Holmlid, 2014) or "spreading" service design (Lin et al., 2011). It is a way of building shared understanding of the objectives and importance of projects. It makes it easier for the organisation to further develop a service using the same principles as the designers, and supports the organisation in making choices and priorities later on. It can be argued that a foundation for this is established in the discussions and negotiations between the designers and the organisation as the project and design brief is defined (Acklin et al., 2013).

A third important technique for involving the organisation in service design projects is the use of visualisations. Common visualisations techniques in service design are customer journeys, service blueprints, stakeholder maps and storyboards (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012). Visualisations make it easier for stakeholders to view the service as a whole, gain an understanding of the user perspective, enable them to picture and concretise possible solutions and help create shared understanding between the involved parties (Gloppen, 2011). The use of visualisations can also stimulate stakeholder creativity and positive attitudes towards the project (Han, 2009).

As described in this chapter, service design comes equipped with tools and approaches relevant to the creation of organisational readiness for change. It does however lack theoretical perspectives on what processes of implementation and organisational change actually entail. In the next chapter, we therefore turn to change management to see what it has in stock for service designers.

## 5 How to create readiness for change in the field of change management

### 5.1 The process of change

Change management can be described as the management of a process of continuous renewal of an organisation's direction and structure (By, 2005). It can also be described as the process where any entity within the organisation takes a different, future state than its current or previous one by going through a transition (Nadler & Tushman, 1997). These stages are often referred to as unfreezing, change and refreezing (Lewin, 1947). The creation of readiness for change needs to take place at the unfreezing stage, with a focus on the identification and understanding of the need for change towards a future state. Change management focuses on the fact that change is a process and not a singular event, and that implementation is a key activity (Krüger, 2010): there is less focus on the designed service as the end result of a design process, and more on facilitating the change (Burnes, 1996). The activity of implementing a new organisational design can be considered a change process.

### 5.2 Approaches to creating organisational readiness for change

The change management field consists of many different theories and approaches. Providing an exhaustive overview is beyond the scope of this paper. However, some of the practical theories include similar principles (By, 2005), which will be described in this section.

Fostering change is difficult. Therefore, the organisation must accept and want the change as the change process starts. Armenakis et al. (1999) list five elements that are important to creating readiness: the need for change, demonstrating that it is the right change, support from key people for the change, confidence of members in success of change, and an answer to the question "what is in it for me/us?". Lehman et al. (2002) identify four main areas to assess the readiness for change: motivation for change, institutional resources of the programme, personality attributes of staff, and finally, organisational climate.

In the context of services, it is the new service solution that brings about the change. Since implementation is so important, it needs to be managed carefully. Several of the elements mentioned by Armenakis et al. (1999) and Lehman et al. (2002) can be managed through stakeholder involvement (Karlsen, 2002). One approach to stakeholder management for successful change or implementation has three parts: shaping the political dynamics, motivating constructive behaviour and managing the transition (Krüger, 2010) (Table 1).

**Table 1. Change problems and implications, adapted from Krüger (2010).**

Problem	Implication
Power	Need to shape the political dynamics associated with change
Anxiety	Need to motivate constructive behaviour in response to the change
Control	Need to systematically manage the transition state

In order to shape the wanted political dynamics, relevant stakeholders in the organisation must be mapped out. This includes mapping who the promoters and opponents are, and what possible reasons to resist the change could be. The next step is to develop a strategy for building support for the change process among the stakeholders in the organisation. This can

be done for example through participation, bargaining, isolation and clear communication on what is about to happen. Getting the support of key leaders is important (Armenakis et al., 1999). The implementation toolbox contains activities like workshops, participation, prototyping and pilot projects that can strengthen the readiness for change (Krüger, 2010).

Other elements of readiness, such as seeing the need for change, demonstrating that it is the right change, and highlighting the advantages for individuals and groups (Armenakis et al., 1999), can be dealt with by focusing on constructive behaviour. Motivating such behaviour can be done by creating dissatisfaction with the current state – by "unfreezing" the change (Lewin, 1947). Through the use of participation techniques, stakeholders can more easily understand what is wrong with the current state. In managing the change, it is also important to clearly communicate the future state and its benefits, so that the organisation understands why the transition must happen. Consistency in communication, empowerment of stakeholders that will be affected by the change, and being open to feedback and input are important aspects enabling a change process to gain support from within the organisation.

## **6 Proposal of principles to support readiness for service design projects**

Service design and change management have several commonalities. They are both approaches that in some way contribute to change, and they have largely intangible outcomes. The two fields also operate with similar tools and methods, and both represent processes that have to be designed and adjusted according to the situation (Burnes, 1996). Service design is however a relatively new field. It does come equipped with tools and approaches relevant to implementation, but could benefit from adopting perspectives, approaches and practices from change management. Others have already commented on the similarities between service design and change management (e.g. Lin et al., 2011). Service design approaches like "Designing for Service" and "Transformational Design" consider service design to be a change process (Kimbell, 2011; Steen et al., 2011). In the following sections, based on the review of what service design already has in stock and what can be learnt from change management literature, we present three important principles that service designers may emphasise in order to create organisational readiness for change and succeed with service design implementation activities.

### **6.1 Stakeholder management and involvement**

In this paper, we have argued that there may be a risk that service designers focus too much on the end user experience and neglect the needs of other stakeholders in the service provider organisations. In a sense, service designers are more concerned with solving user needs than business needs (Gloppen, 2011). That said, and even though service designers and service providers may share a common goal in obtaining business objectives, their approaches to achieving this may be different. Co-design is most often used with service provider organisation representatives and not so often with the customer and user. Co-design activities may contribute to creating readiness for service project implementation through goal alignment, and by ensuring that the design process is transparent, which means that each participant has access to the same information and the same understanding of the purpose (Blomkvist & Holmlid, 2011).

In change management an important task is mapping and managing all stakeholders and their role in the organisation and the change process. To strengthen the field in the area of implementation, service designers could put more emphasis on this activity, as it is important in order to better understand how the change will be received by the organisation. They could do so by paying attention to aspects of readiness for the new service, such as the need for the change, and the personal, group and organisational advantages that will result

from the change. To ensure readiness for the project aims, decision makers and key leaders at different organisational levels should be identified and included in the process.

## **6.2 Journey over destination**

While change management has a clear focus on the implementation of change, this is not always the case in service design. There, the user, user experience and the proposed service tend to be in focus. Design is often presented as a result, in the form of features of a physical product or an intangible service, rather than as the process of arriving at that result (Mager & Sung, 2011; Leon, 2014). In line with authors in the field of change management (Burnes, 1996; Sangiorgi, 2011), we suggest that service designers could consider the implementation process a key activity in service design, and thereby reflect more on their role as facilitators of change, including the organisational changes that come with the implementation of a newly designed service.

## **6.3 Change from within**

In change management theory there is broad agreement that change needs to come from within the organisation through support from different layers and departments (Armenakis et al., 1999; Klev & Levin, 2009). While change management originates from consulting firms, it is a discipline that is now taught at business schools. This results in a better understanding of change processes amongst future business managers.

Service design is increasingly focusing on how to foster change within organisations (Sangiorgi, 2011). In management literature however, different views of what design entails can still be found. Design is often introduced in the periphery of the organisation, and commonly seen as a separate phase of a project that comes after strategy (Kimbell, 2011). This shows that there is also potential for the fields of management to learn about design. If design is seen as work done for and not together with organisations – as is often the case nowadays, the organisation may not be prepared to put sufficient effort into it (Blomkvist & Holmlid, 2011). Another problem occurs when service design projects are not accepted at all relevant levels of the organisation. This may make it harder to achieve stakeholder involvement. It is therefore also important to look at how knowledge about service design can be spread. Organisations need to see and understand "the value of design as a strategic resource", in addition to seeing the added value of the change that is about to happen (Armenakis et al., 1999; Lehman et al., 2002). This can in turn support the implementation of service design approaches and outcomes in the organisation and its processes.

## **7 Conclusion**

Creating readiness for change in the organisation where a new service is about to be introduced is important for successful service design implementation – the ultimate goal of service design projects. Because implementation of new services depends on the organisation's ability to change, service design projects should take account of organisational change process principles that focus on readiness for change. While the field of service design is equipped with relevant tools and approaches for succeeding with activities of creating readiness for change, service designers can still learn much from the field of change management. In this paper, we have introduced three principles that may support the readiness for service design projects in service organisations: a) *Stakeholder management and involvement*, b) *Journey over destination*, and c) *Change from within*. Further research is needed in order to investigate how to operationalise these principles in design practice, and to test their effects on service design project implementation processes.



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