

Design thinking in government

Leaders roundtable with Professor Jeanne Liedtka

23 September 2016



Background and intent

Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Head of the Policy Profession, hosted a round table for senior government leaders and academics from Victoria University with Professor Jeanne Liedtka from the Darden Business School.

The session was to learn about the potential benefits of design thinking for government and what leaders can do to enable and support design thinking and innovation capability, in their organisations and across government.

“Design thinking is a systematic approach to problem solving”

– Jeanne Liedtka

Participants

Professor Jeanne Liedtka
Darden Business School
University of Virginia

Andrew Kibblewhite
Chief Executive
Department of the Prime
Minister and Cabinet

Liz MacPherson
Government Statistician

Pauline Winter
Chief Executive
Ministry of Pacific Peoples

Naomi Ferguson
Commissioner of Inland
Revenue

Peter Mersi
Chief Executive
Ministry of Transport

David Smol
Chief Executive
Ministry of Business, Innovation
and Employment

Anneliese Parkin
Deputy Chief Executive
Department of the Prime
Minister and Cabinet

Andrew Jackson
Deputy Chief Executive
Ministry of Transport

Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Secretary
Ministry for the Environment

Fiona Ross
Deputy Secretary
The Treasury

Girol Karacaoglu
VUW School of Government

Barbara Allen
VUW School of Government

Verna Smith
VUW School of Government

Dr Michael Macaulay
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Policy Project team

Sally Washington
Programme Manager

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Benefits of design thinking for government

Process for producing better ideas

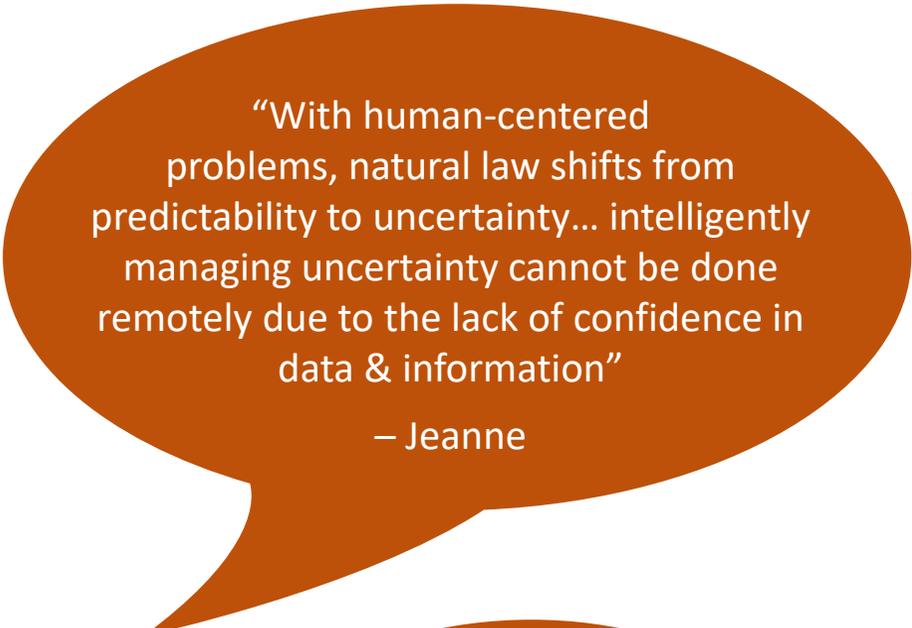
DT provides a robust methodology for uncovering and iterating innovative ideas and solutions. The methodology is grounded in user needs and experiences. It encourages investment in analysis of a portfolio of possibilities/solutions without reference to constraints (these are introduced in testing).

Risk mitigation strategy

By running small quick experiments in the real world, DT helps to minimise and manage risk. This requires a new skill set: shifting to being hypothesis driven, testing and refining, and drawing on all available data (big and deep).

Managing change

DT involves people in the change process. Up front time and costs in agreeing intent pay off over time as it facilitates acceptance of the solution, wherever it ends up. A focus on users avoids the common impediment of agency conflict. People are energised by possibilities, not constraints – starting in the possibilities space helps with creativity to deal with constraints later in the process.



“With human-centered problems, natural law shifts from predictability to uncertainty... intelligently managing uncertainty cannot be done remotely due to the lack of confidence in data & information”

– Jeanne



“You need to shift people from short-term self-interest to longer-term greater good”

– Jeanne

Benefits of design thinking for government

Aligning diverse stakeholders

DT brings 'the system' into the room, by using stakeholder mapping and aligning diverse perspectives.

It offers the 'social technology' to have more effective conversations among diverse stakeholders, providing a path for higher order solutions and avoiding 'satisficing' compromises (the typical low return way of dealing with difference). It gives better information (about users and others in the value chain) to make better strategy and policy choices for delivery.

Empowering local capabilities

DT provides the infrastructure for content to be derived at the local level – and the discipline to enable solutions that work locally to be scaled and spread wider.

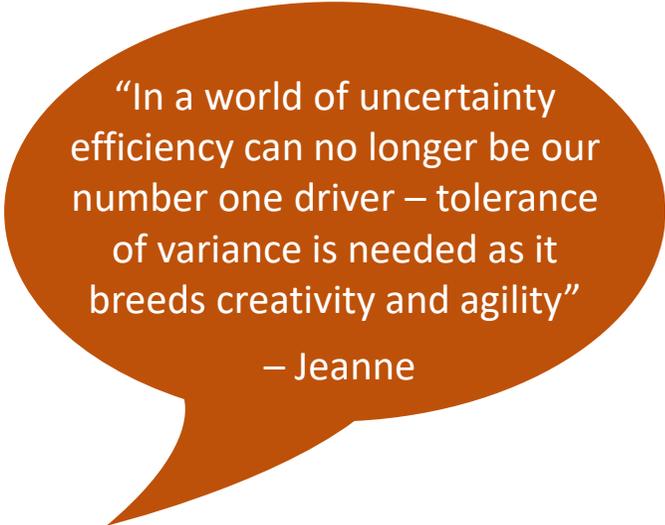
Increasing the speed of innovation

DT values diversity. Diversity is the key to decision creativity, integrity and resilience. When innovating in a complex system, slowness impedes motivation and momentum – DT builds alignment around what really matters. Rapid iteration is a key part of the process.

A large, dark orange speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the top left. It contains a quote in white text.

“Anyone not part of the conversation is unlikely to be sold on the solution”

– Jeanne

A large, dark orange speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the top left. It contains a quote in white text.

“In a world of uncertainty efficiency can no longer be our number one driver – tolerance of variance is needed as it breeds creativity and agility”

– Jeanne

Questions and responses

How does this relate to politics and taking solutions through to decisions and legislation?

DT allows for small scale trials, using real world data, that avoids the visibility of politics – it helps to provide knowledge about the likely effects of regulation through experimentation prior to it being enacted.

Starting small in the midst of complexity enables a good use of resources, ‘below the radar’ experimentation before formalising and scaling the solution.

How can leaders support design thinking?

Senior leaders can be enablers by providing the infrastructure and culture – including permission for intelligent risk taking and experimentation.

It is best to combine the ‘grass roots’ approach with senior leadership support (top-down and bottom up). Leaders need to ‘walk the talk’.

Lack of an experimental intelligent risk-taking culture is the biggest impediment to creating an innovative micro-climate.



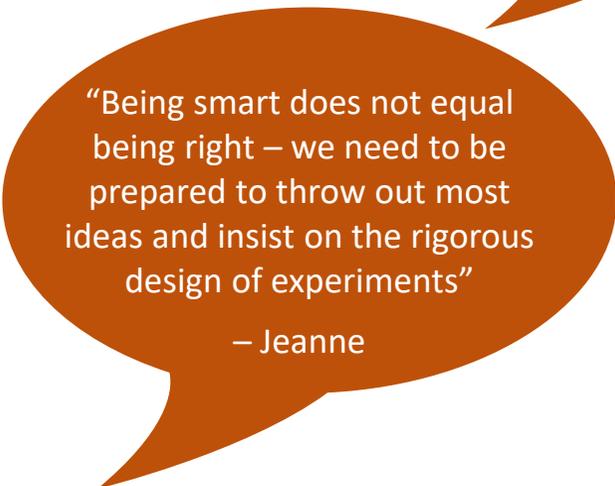
“Senior mandarins perceive their core business to be finding compromise. How could we involve ministers in surfacing possible solutions?”

– Chief executive



“Gaining political buy-in is a separate process but could be supported by design thinking”

– Chief executive



“Being smart does not equal being right – we need to be prepared to throw out most ideas and insist on the rigorous design of experiments”

– Jeanne

Questions and responses

How might we organise ourselves to build capability in design thinking?

Provide a clear path for when design thinking and innovation is required and will be accepted.

Offer some rigorous design thinking training, focusing on those who are willing and interested – don't impose it.

Invest in some deep capability and expertise (e.g. a Lab with design capability and design thinking 'mentors').

Create experiences with design thinking tools as a vehicle for changing mind-sets.

Where does design thinking fit with technology tools (for engagement)?

Technology can support design thinking depending on the difficulty of the challenge/problem and stage of the process.

Technological tools can be used to surface opinions as input to the process.

Trust is an important part of the design process so engagement using technology is unlikely to enable alignment – face to face interaction is best for dealing with conflict and conflicting perspectives.



“Local innovations do not spread without centrally encouraging ‘efficient learning’ and disciplined experimentation”
– Jeanne



“We need to go beyond playing with methods – we need to apply those methods to real problems, and create demonstration projects, to show the true value of design thinking”
– Participant

Questions and responses

Is design thinking an end-to-end process or can you use design thinking ‘bit-by-bit’?

Think of design thinking as a toolkit – some of the tools can be used for any problem solving process – it helps to use the output/insights from whatever tool into the next task/phase/level of decision making. To do this people may need to have a sense of the end-to-end process first, or they will struggle with what the process is all for. Design thinking is most powerful for human-centred problems where we don’t have existing data or information to tell us what to do.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Michael Macaulay and VUW for partnering on the session and for providing the space and refreshments.

Thanks to the government leaders and VUW academics who participated in the spirit of learning and discovery.

Many thanks to Jeanne Liedtka for sharing her insights, expertise and inspiration.

“Design thinking is not for every challenge
– it is most valuable for human-centred problems”

– Jeanne Liedtka



Annex: Design thinking – the Darden method



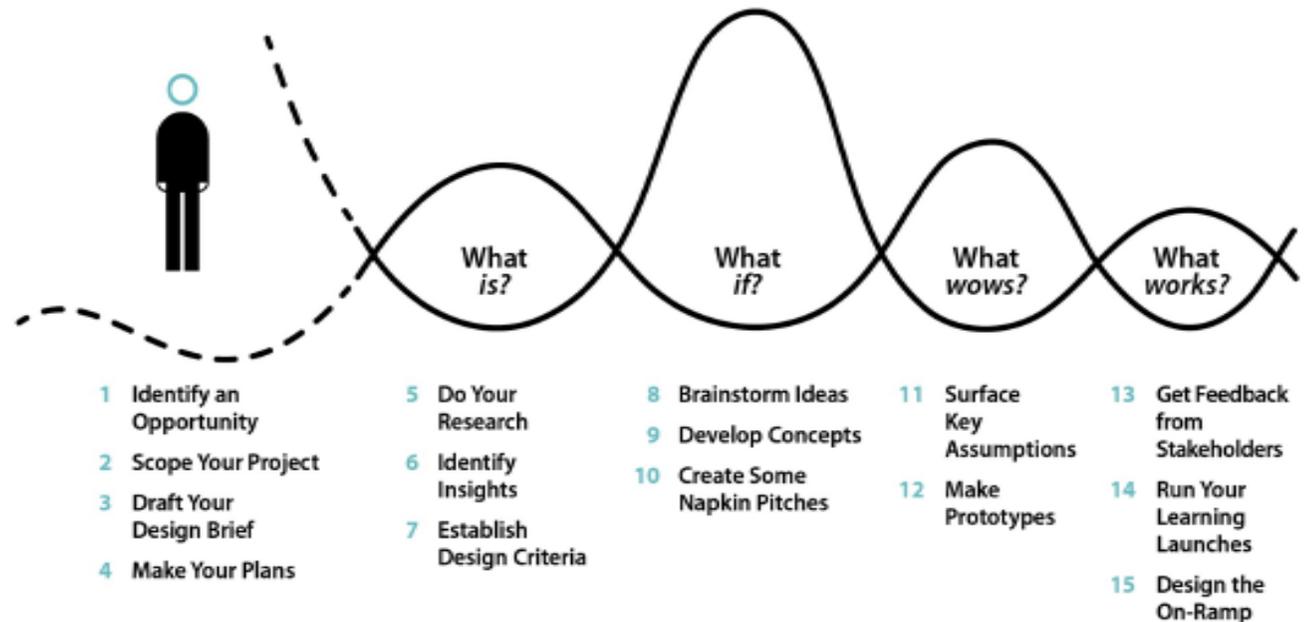
Want to know more?

If you are interested in learning more about Jeanne Liedtka and the Darden approach to design thinking check out:

www.darden.virginia.edu/faculty-research/directory/jeanne-m-liedtka for information on Jeanne and her research.

www.jeanneliedtka.com for resources including videos on innovation and design thinking.

Steps to Designing For Growth



Annex: Design thinking – the Darden method

Design thinking – thinking design

If we thought more like designers what would be different?

Problem solving would be driven by three core beliefs:

- **Empathy** – start by establishing a deep understanding of human needs
- **Invention** – discover new possibilities
- **Iteration** – use the first solutions only as stepping stones to a better one

Jeanne Liedtka – ANZSOG seminar

23 September 2016

See more information [here](#)

10 Design thinking tools

- Visualisation
- Journey mapping
- Value chain analysis
- Mind mapping
- Rapid concept development
- Assumption testing
- Customer co-creation
- Storytelling



www.ideas.darden.virginia.edu/2016/07/10-design-thinking-tools-turn-creativity-and-data-into-growth