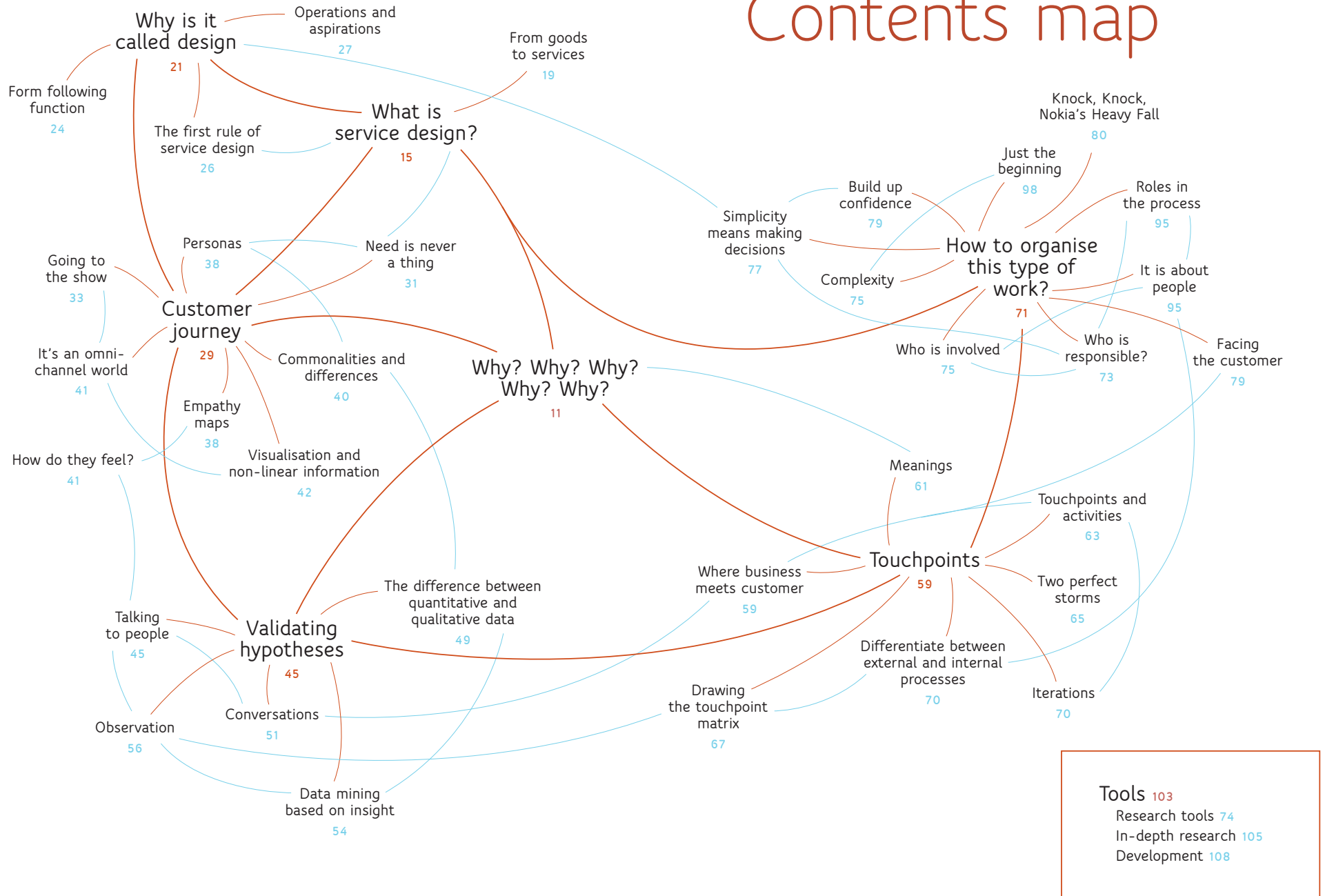


Contents map



This new situation has come about by a combination of technological democratization and globalization. Round the clock low cost access to the internet has created new industries (like apps and mobile services). It has allowed people to organize (from demonstrators to parental groups) and made peer reviews, outside the control of marketers, the most trusted source of information about products and services. Thanks to, and because of this, globalization and the reduction of trade barriers have made competition much more intense. People are empowered to choose what is best for them from anywhere in the world.

In this environment, the keys to a competitive advantage are the way the product or service is delivered, the way it is experienced, and the design of the product or service.

It is also important to recognize that for most products and services the purchase moment makes up the smallest and perhaps least significant part of the customer experience. Buying a new phone is not about owning a phone; it is about having a digital service delivered. Similarly, a car should no longer be a machine with which to drive but a vehicle that is connected to maps and traffic reports, helping the driver get from A to B with minimal wasted time. This makes up the customer experience, and the details of this ownership experience are what is shared online in product review forums.

This book is about improving these experiences – about designing a whole service, from the moment the customer starts thinking about the possible purchase until the end of the life cycle of the product. Improving on all the points of interaction will improve customer satisfaction. From a marketing perspective, nothing sells as well as satisfied customers. For this reason, applying service design can help you cut your marketing budget in half. Or, in other words, let you have your cake and eat it too.



Providing information > managing expectations

A good customer experience comes down to managing expectations. If you, as a customer, know that you'll have to wait two hours for a service, those two hours become the default against which a good and bad service experience is judged. If the service is delivered in 1 hour and 45 minutes, you'll be pleased. If it takes 2 hours and 10 minutes, you will be frustrated. But if you're promised a service in 15 minutes and it still takes an hour, you will complain of terrible service – even though the net result is BETTER than the 2 hour waiting time.

Managing expectations means providing relevant and reliable information at every step of the customer service process. Many software companies are already doing a good job of providing relevant information. Great software works step by step in such a common-sense fashion that each step contains instructions for the next step, so that everyone can use it.

Signage in the cityscape works the same way. Signs pointing in the right direction must be placed at all points where there are more than one option to choose from. Furthermore, on long stretches of road or highway, signs must be placed periodically to reinforce our knowledge that we made the right decision. Anything less, and we lose confidence that we are going the right way.

From goods to services

From the beginning of the Industrial Revolution until the end of the 20th century, we have lived in a world where things were made and then delivered. Products were complicated, often unreliable, and the difference in quality and usability among similar products was clear. The cost of items was related to how well they worked. Improvements to products were made in-house, tested in-house, packaged, and then marketed. Customer feedback was gained at the last step in the process: in the store.

This industrial, or goods-dominated, logic, has prevailed to this day, but is less and less viable as the difference in quality between products disappears. As many products now do the same thing with comparable quality, the defining moment is no longer in what products do, but how they do it. The “how” is the value it delivers to the customer, because the “what” has become a hygiene factor.

A fundamental difference between goods and services is that a service is created in cooperation between the delivering party and the receiving party. It cannot be pre-packaged and delivered. It is unique every time, and different people may experience the same service in radically different ways. The gym is a perfect example: for the person in good shape who has been to gyms before and is comfortable in an environment where everyone looks at one another, the experience is largely positive. For someone determined to improve his or her physi-



The key to service design is to see the world from the customer's perspective – not to change his or her behavior, but to change your company's behavior.

In order to find what a small child has hidden, it is best to view the world from the child's viewpoint. Sit on the floor. What is the most inaccessible point you can reach?

The customer journey

Walking in the customer's shoes

The first step to improving the customer experience is to experience the experience. In other words, to understand what your customers are going through, you must look at the world through their eyes. The customer journey for different products and services differs case by case. However, in general this experience starts well before the person arrives to buy something and ends only after the product has been discarded or the service is used.



MIT Agelab. AGNES – Age Gain Now Empathy System.
<http://tinyurl.com/8a5n93x>

Try to imagine not knowing everything there is to know about your product or service. An airline pilot may be an expert on airports and planes but may have never experienced typical customer frustrations: a long queue in check-in, security, overweight luggage, crying babies, narrow seats, and bad food. A pilot's advice on improving airline service, therefore, may prove to be worthless.

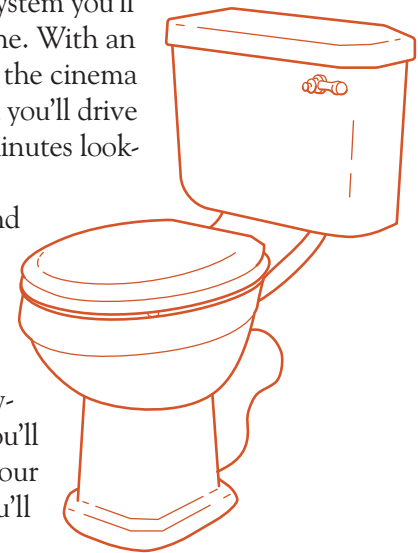
Going to the show

Consider a trip to the movies. The journey to the cinema starts with getting interested in one film or another. This interest might be sparked by a poster on a billboard or a TV commercial or a video going viral and ending up in your Facebook feed. Whichever way it happens, somehow you have been made aware of a movie, and you want to see it.

Once you've figured out which movie you want to see, you'll need to find somewhere to see it. In the likelihood that you know which movie theatre you'd prefer to visit, you go online to check the cinema's website and choose a day and time to see the film. Buying the ticket online allows you to pick your own seat. With a sophisticated booking system you'll receive a digital ticket on your smartphone. With an older system you'll print out the ticket at the cinema from a self-service kiosk. And before that you'll drive to the movie theater and spend several minutes looking for a parking spot nearby.

Once you've stood in line for sodas and popcorn, you'll proceed to the movie theater, perhaps via the over-used and under-cleaned toilet. And because it's cold outside you're over-heating in your winter jacket, which you can't hang anywhere. Once you enter the movie hall, you'll discover that there is nowhere to place your jacket there either, which means that you'll spend the next two hours sitting on it.

The film lives up to every one of your wildest cinematic fantasies. You're happy. But as the credits roll, you realize you need to use the toilet again, thanks to the gargantuan soda you've just consumed. Depending on the cinema and time of day, you might instead be shown straight out of the theatre into the alleyway, because everything else in the



Validating hypotheses

Talking to people

You know a lot about your business that your customers don't care to know. Basing improvements in your service on what you know can create more problems than it solves. The biggest assumption is made in the beginning: we always presume that the customer is interested in our service or product. In fact, the opposite is often true. The customer's interest is often limited to wishing that the company would deliver a relevant service or product. Service delivered does not automatically equal value received.



Service delivered
≠ value received

It is tempting to presume that a small sampling is indicative of all customers. Business owners often think that once things are explained in writing, changes won't have to be made because people can read the instructions and learn. The exercise in mapping customer journeys for many different personas utilizing many different channels should serve to illustrate how potentially complex situations can be.

the mediator or facilitator must see and understand the arguments customers make through the customers' eyes. If you can only see the business's perspective, you cannot do this job

One-to-one interviews

The advantage of one-on-one conversations is that they are intimate and relatively quick. It doesn't take much more than 1–2 hours to work through a complete customer journey with a customer, to understand whether the key hypothesis that you formulated applies to this person or not.

The best conversation partner is the one that listens. Your role in the conversation is to keep the dialogue flowing; the customer's role is to provide information to you. People are



experts in their own experience. When they have a chance to talk, they will do so, often going into great detail. However, when you ask direct questions, people tend to rationalize. As a result, you will get only an interpretation of past events, not a description.

Group discussions

Having a larger group of similar people in a group conversation has the benefit of bringing lots of opinions to the table. Conversations and ideas bounce off one another, and this process can be inspiring. The danger is of course that if someone dominates the conversation, everyone else will amplify this one person's opinion. The whole exercise can end up as completely irrelevant, if it isn't managed carefully.

Depending on the size of the group, you may have to divide it into smaller clusters of people. The best group size is three people, because no one can hide in such a small unit. In large groups, 1–2 people often end up dominating the conversation while the rest follow.

Allow for 3–4 hours for a group discussion. Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and feel valuable. It is important to realize that this kind of meeting is also a brand-building exercise where the brand directly interacts with customers and asks for advice. Make sure the tone of the meeting is serious.

Workshops

Knowing where problems lie is only half the battle. Knowing what to do about them is the other half. Working with a larger group of customer representatives to understand and validate or reject a customer journey hypothesis can also be part of the process of solving problems. People naturally have opinions not only of what is wrong but also of how the problem could be solved, for them. Therefore, with good crowd management it is possible to do two things at once: validate or reject a hypothesis and gain ideas on how to improve and fix problems.

Observation

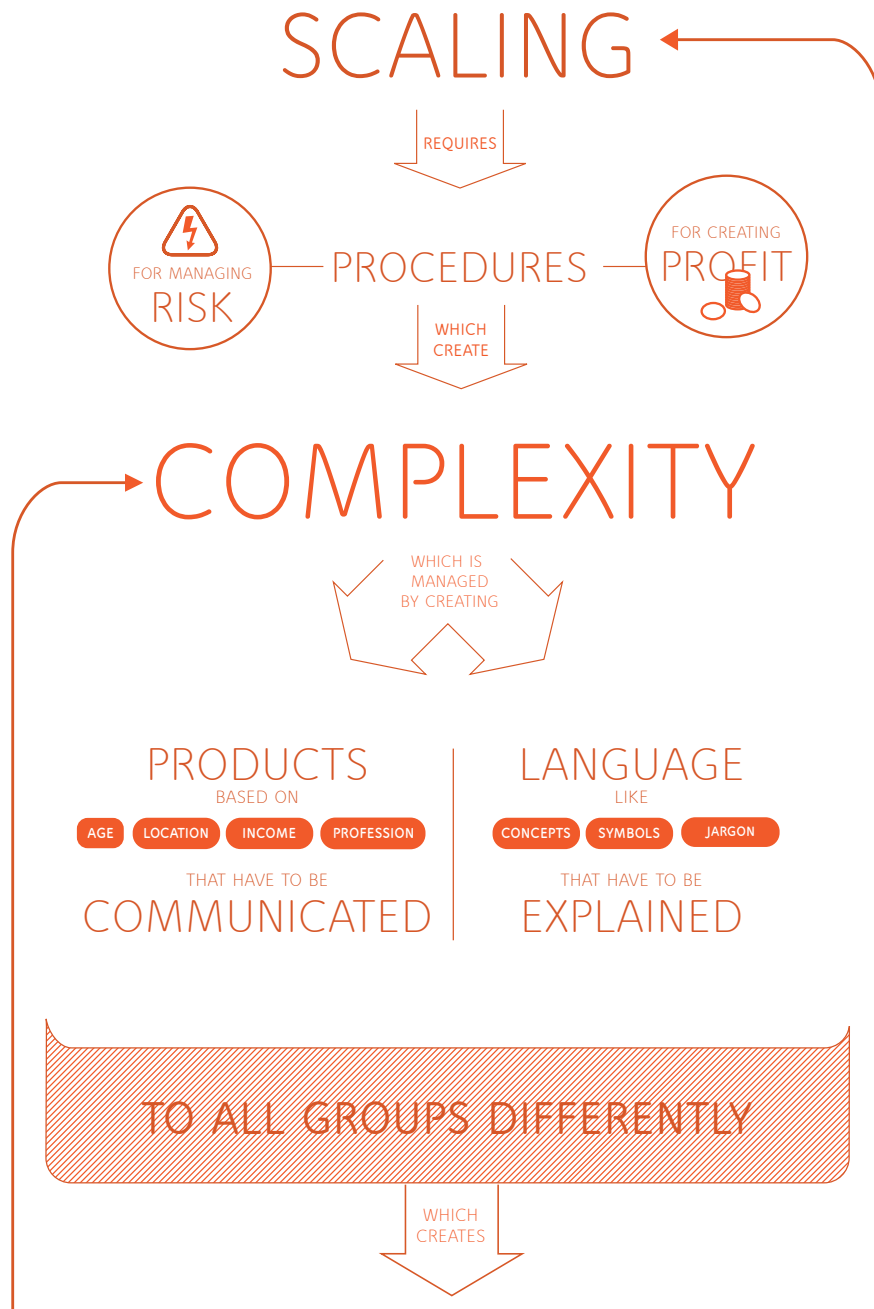
People buy what is for sale. This means that people can't buy what is not on the shelf. So when asking people what they want, the most common answer is a request for something that is already out there. Therefore, one of the best ways of finding out what people actually have trouble with, and what is no trouble at all, is observation. Spend some time looking at what customers do and when they do it. Take notes. It is important though, that the observer doesn't influence the choice of the observed. Otherwise the whole exercise is moot.

People have a habit of taking short-cuts

Landscaping around new buildings often means that the walkways and sidewalks are predetermined and follow a route that looked good on a map when the building was being planned. However, if there is a shorter route between two points, a new path often appears in the place where people actually walked. Eventually, architects learned that landscaping before these natural walkways had been determined was a gigantic waste of money. Therefore, when larger buildings with large landscaping areas are finished, instead of proceeding according to the map, the area is simply cleared and left as it is for a few weeks. After this period, it is easy to determine where the natural paths are and how the walkways should be placed.

Touchpoint Matrix

	Attract	Choose	Use	Support	Retain
	What is getting the customer's / user's attention	What are we doing to make choosing the product / service easy	What's going on when they use the product / service	What makes using the service / product better	What are we doing to make sure the customer comes back
Stage / Place					
Where is it happening? Online or real life?					
Audience / Customer					
What is the customer doing?					
Actors / Staff					
What are staff doing?					
Script / Protocol					
What processes or procedures are being followed					
Backstage / Support functions					
What tools do staff have to work with					



tomer) is actually created. And then simplifying everything so that the value is delivered as quickly and easily as possible.

Simplicity means making decisions

Mono-functional tools are the best. A carving knife is better for carving than a pocket knife. A real camera is better than a smartphone. A flight ticket booking site where it is possible to just book the tickets and understand exactly what you're paying for is better than a site that also offers you hotels, taxis, buses, insurance, and coffee on board.

Over time, simple tools get complicated if one forgets where the value lies for the customer. At one time, Nokia was the best mobile phone maker, providing simple, intuitive menus that everyone could learn to use in minutes. However, with each new phone, new layers of possibilities were added to the menu, without considering if it were necessary to omit older functionalities.

Eventually, users were required to move their Nokia phones through five levels of completely unintuitive menus just to change the ring-tone. Shortly thereafter, along came the iPhone with a learning curve of 30 seconds.

Simplicity means reducing the number of options, not increasing them. Simplicity means making some decisions for the customer, not deferring everything so that she can choose. Having many options to choose from has been shown to cause stress and actually turns people away. Many users find it easier not to choose than to try to choose among a multitude of incomprehensible versions of the same basic product.

It easier not to choose than to try to choose among a multitude of incomprehensible versions