

Queering the Human-Centered Design Thinking Process for LGBTQ+ Health and Wellbeing

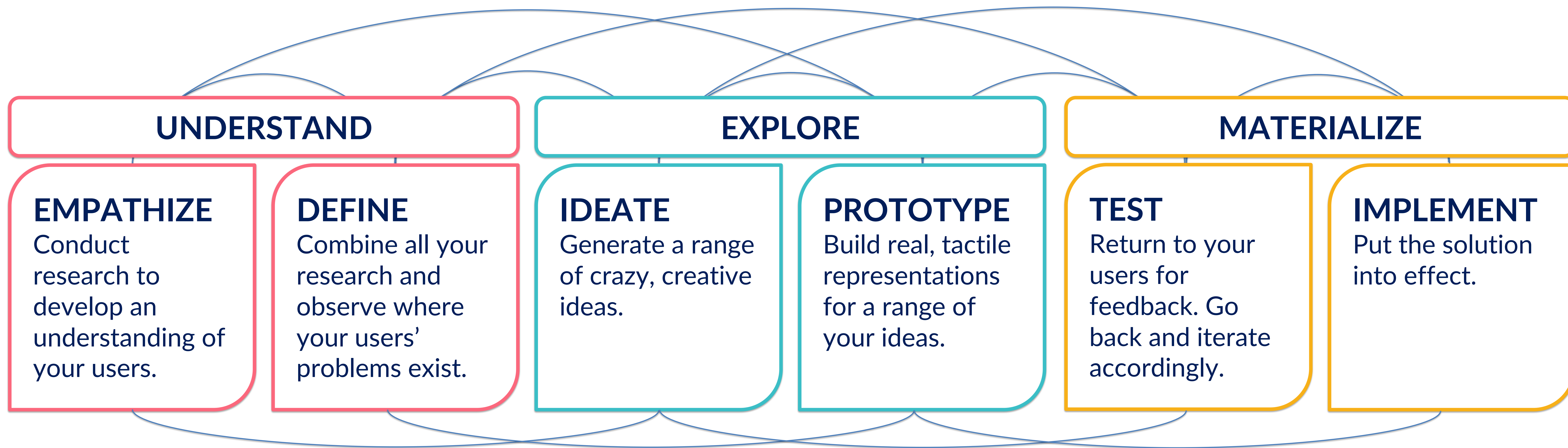


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DESIGN THINKING is a method of solving issues that centers the people experiencing them.

This approach was made accessible and brought into the mainstream by IDEO, a global design company, in 1991. Since then, design thinking has gained rapid prominence across various fields, including healthcare and social services.



QUEERING SYSTEMS
Changing or adapting a process based on culture and behavior that is common among LGBTQ+ communities.

QUEERING UNDERSTANDING: Making Space for Emotion

QUEERING EXPLORATION: Adapting Off the Rack

QUEERING MATERIALIZATION: Celebrating and Iterating

Building Trust through Empathy: Empathy is the antidote to bias, judgement, and politics. It is also the first step to establishing trust between yourself and your LGBTQ+ stakeholders.

LGBTQ+ communities didn't invent empathy, but their lived experiences have often made them good at it. Because LGBTQ+ people are more likely to face discrimination, stigma, and family and community rejection- or know someone who has- they are often well suited to empathize with others.

When gathering information from stakeholders, don't forget the emotional part of their journeys. Their experiences are more than data. Allow space for yourself to feel the pains, joys, and boredoms of their experiences. The result will be mutual trust, allowing you to continue working together throughout the project towards a solution.

The Value of Intersectionality: Design thinking acknowledges and incorporates diverse experiences, considering how factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status intersect with sexual orientation and gender identity- and how these intersecting identities play a role in people's needs.

Creating by Adapting: A cornerstone of queer expression is transforming what you have into what you need. There is a long queer history of altering off the rack clothing to fit bodies. Whether it's lengthening or shortening, letting things in or out, the key to a good fit is practice. Prototyping is the time to keep trying until you find something that works.

Being part of any minoritized group is knowing that solutions are often not designed with you in mind. This means inventing, adapting, and combining solutions from that are functional for all. Prototyping doesn't always mean starting from scratch. Sometimes it can be easier to adapt.

Collaboration and Co-Creation: Design thinking fosters collaboration and co-creation, enabling the involvement of LGBTQ+ people, healthcare providers, researchers, and community organizations in the design and implementation of solutions. This collaborative approach ensures that solutions are rooted in the real experiences and needs of the community.

Iterative Problem Solving: Design thinking is an on-going process, allowing for continuous feedback and refinement. It encourages a dynamic approach to problem-solving. This part of the design process should be an iterative feedback loop, with prototyping, testing, and refining happening as frequently as necessary until a resonant and responsive solution emerges. You should be making changes whenever they are necessary, regardless of timeframe, budget, or other factors.

If you've reached the implementation phase you've been working hard. Don't forget to celebrate yourself, your team, and your community. Celebrating isn't extra work. Celebrating is the work.

Taking Pride in the Work: There's a reason why events like Pride have such a celebratory feel to them. Life can be hard, and you can't wait for someone else to appreciate you. Celebrating together with your team and community allows you to acknowledge all the folks who have contributed to the success. It also allows you to welcome new people into your work and build your network.