WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Design With the People Using It

A checked need, a small prototype, and a plan to learn from real use.

30 minutes | Design thinking · Understand / Define / Ideate / Prototype / Test

Use it in three moves

1. Learn about a real situation, then describe the need without building your preferred solution into it.

2. Generate different ways to help. Make the uncertain part of one option tangible enough for someone to try.

3. Observe use without coaching people toward the answer. Let confusion or a different need change the design and the next test.

Understand people's experience

Observe or interview with consent. Separate what you saw from what you assume they need.

Define the need

Describe a person, situation, and difficulty without embedding your favorite solution.

Generate several ways to help

Try at least three materially different options before choosing. Include a process change.

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YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Make the uncertain part tangible

Build a rough, accessible version suited to the question. State what is simulated.

Observe use without coaching the answer

Give a realistic task, ask what they expect, and record confusion as information.

Change the idea or the framing

What did you learn, what will change, and what will you test next?

A question for me

What could a participant tell us that would change the solution?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Understand people's experience

Watch two new starters find an approval contact. Both open an outdated page before asking a colleague.

Define the need

A new starter needs a trustworthy contact route when they cannot tell which page is current.

Generate several ways to help

Remove old pages; add a visible owner and date; provide one maintained contact route.

Make the uncertain part tangible

A paper or clickable mockup of the contact route. Links are simulated; the aim is to test understanding, not live access.

Observe use without coaching the answer

Ask a starter to find help for a missing permission. Let them navigate before explaining the layout.

Change the idea or the framing

They understand the contact but need to know response time. Add that information and test again before publishing.

The thinking behind it

Invite people to influence the design while it can still change. Participation after all meaningful decisions are fixed is only a demonstration.

Stanford d.school describes empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test as modes of design thinking. This original practical guide uses that iterative pattern; the modes can repeat and are not a guaranteed linear route to a good design.

Stanford · Design thinking

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne