MODEL FOR A RESPONSIBLE AND STRATEGIC DESIGN

DESIGNENCE

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Why Strategic Design For a Responsible Future?

Nowadays, organizations evolve in quite a difficult, hostile, and hyper connected environment. Considering process globalization, flow of information, acceleration of time to market, fusion and even confusion of competencies, digital amplification, or competition aggressivity, businesses are facing multiple massive challenges at the same time. There is so much to embrace. These changes are forcing them to adapt and reconsider their strategies and their operations.

In our worldwide economic context, inflation, recession or even stagnation will put many companies on their knees. Some will disappear. Since the early 1990’s and the end of the Soviet Union ecosystem forming the Eastern Bloc, the US Army created an acronym to describe the confusing time we would now have to deal with: VUCA

**VUCA stands for Volatility - Uncertainty - Complexity - Ambiguity.**

On a more positive note, if the world is facing one of its major mutation, human beings have always demonstrated a capacity for resilience and adaptation.

Strategic Design mirrors this acronym with its own interpretation of VUCA: **Vision – Understanding – Clarity and Agility.**

Creating a meaningful **Vision**, **Understanding** the unmet needs of their customers with authenticity and genuine empathy, generating tangible value, bringing **Clarity** to a complex environment and leveraging **Agile** ways of working.

Comibinated knowledge of a reputed researcher, a seasoned business consultant, and a strategic design expert, *Strategic design for a responsible future* aims at helping all levels and functions of an organization to successfully integrate design as a strategic tool. The model, already applied by successful leaders worldwide, is a bridge between two approaches, Design and Business, which has been proven to solve business challenges and enable sustainable growth.

*Strategic design for a responsible future* includes the tools to integrate the specificity of the design mindset and effectuation and is illustrated by cases from various industries as well as testimonials from large and small organizations.
Who is this model for?

- **C-Suite**: business leaders, decision makers, leadership team, or board members
- **Functional leaders**: including Innovation, Research & Development, Marketing, Finance, HR, Operations, Procurement, Business Development, Legal, Sales, and Customer facing
- **Business Management students and all students**: willing to explore new models to apply
- **Designers**: understanding that creative people with intuitive thinking skills can bring much more than aesthetic and style to a business
- **Strategists**: looking for understanding and applying new ways to solve business challenges
- **Engineers**: leveraging their analytical skills to solve technical problems and improve organization’s project delivery with new approach and mindset
- **Startups/Scaleups/Scalers**: looking to grow and sustain their business

... as well as all curious minds
A business is like a cube. The top representing the organization’s vision, the bottom its mission. Design capabilities, both strategic and operational, are in between and support company’s vision and mission.

*We adore chaos because we love to produce order*

M.C. Escher - Graphic artist
Designence 2.0: a model and a toolbox to make design a key strategic tool and an operational resource.

The cube: Designence 2.0

Brigitte Borja de Mozota, author of “The four powers of design” published in the Design Management Review in 2005, has introduced Designence® four-quadrant model on how design impacts the organization. The outcome of her scientific research exposed a set of business-related activities in which the design function contributes or sometimes leads to business transformation. Designence® model demonstrates how design management activities influence ways of managing an organization. Based on the Business Score Card model by Robert S Kaplan and David P Norton released in 1992 in the Harvard Business Review, this adapted model of the BSC was the first attempt to measure the value of design on business results.

While this model has been explained in a book and applied by some design leaders, it had difficulties to gain large adoption among both business and design communities. Like many creative processes, it required several attempts and a good number of iterations to crack what we now call Designence 2.0, illustrated by one of the simplest artifacts: a cube.

In this document, we explain the mechanics of this model, highlighting the combinations that can bring any organization to the next level in term of design capability.

Explanations:

The six sides of the cube represent the company’s Vision and Mission, and how the four Powers of Design impact the company’s operations while supporting its strategy.

The Vision is the organization’s long-term goal, while the Mission is how to reach this objective. The position of the four Powers of...
Figure 1
H. Collignon and B. Borja de Mozota (2021):
The illustrated Designence model
design perfectly illustrates how Design is involved in both the strategy that supports the Vision and the operations that enable the Mission.

**Company Vision and Mission and their impacts**

When he left the banks of Castille, Christopher Columbus expected to find a faster way to reach the East Indies. He had a vision that fed his appetite to explore new path to the lucrative spice trade.

Whether you are a successful business leader, an astute student in engineering, a cool start-up entrepreneur or even a creative designer, having a clear aspiration of what you want to achieve is not an option. It is essential before embarking on such a journey. You have to decide where you would like to go and certainly why you are even engaging into this journey. In a nutshell, you must define your **Vision**. This Vision will help you define the strategy to achieve your **Mission**.

The Mission could be described as a set of operations put in place to deliver your Vision. That’s why they are highly connected to your values, your brand attributes, your culture, your environment, and even your reason to be who you are. The Mission of any organization has also to include the impacts it will have. We cannot look at the **Business** impact only. Impacts on the **Environment** as well as on **People** are also to be anticipated.

To build on Christopher Columbus metaphor, his Mission was driven by his very own ambition, while being influenced by his knowledge of the sea, the geography and the astronomy. The business dimension of his expedition was certainly on the agenda. Nowadays we can easily see the impact he had on the local populations as much as on the European populations and by extension on the entire world. His impact on the environment should also be considered. The spread of potatoes, corn, coffee or cacao agriculture is definitely part of the outcome of his initial discovery.

Whatever your business industry, the size of your organization, your Vision is supported by customized strategies and your Mission is delivered by a set of operations influenced by the impacts you want to have. While we place the Vision on the top of the cube to illustrate the aspiration it expresses, the Mission is positioned at the bottom to represent the impacts the operations will have on the people, the environment and hopefully on the success of your business.

We therefore consider both Vision and Mission as important as the impacts that should be anticipated and whenever possible, evaluated, as early as possible.
The four powers of Design and their roles to support the company’s Vision and Mission

a. Design as Differentiator (Figure 2)
Probably the most obvious of all the Powers. Design can help you differentiate a product with shape, color, material, function, technology. This one is therefore common sense. However, deeper than the appearance, Design should contribute in many other ways to stand out from competitors and somehow, to the success of a brand, a product, a service, an experience or a solution.

The uniqueness can be expressed outside visually in a simple way. The complexity of the technology inside, hidden from the user, can make the difference versus the
competition. The first iPhone is probably one of the best examples to illustrate how the combination of a sleek design hiding a complex technology resulted in a unique product while placing it for many years ahead of the leaders of the industry. It works similarly when offering experience or a service. Uber or Airbnb outperformed the old players in their respective industry.

We suggest below some questions you might ask yourself to leverage design’s power of differentiation:

- How different do you appear to your customers with design?
- What is your specific approach in consumer research that helps you stand out from the competition?
- Does design management integrate customers’ insights in the business model?
- What have you set up to get design up the scale of the design ladder (process value) in the company and be different from category leaders?

b. Design as Good Business
(Figure 3)
How visionary Watson Jr. was! As the second IBM’s CEO, following his father’s steps, he declared in a 1973 lecture at the University of Pennsylvania, that “good design is good business”. He clearly articulated before anyone else the important value design brings to the business.

Earlier in the 70’s, Olivetti was a new entrant in the typewriter business, not to say a threat for IBM. They understood the capacity of differentiation leveraging the Italian colorful
Waston Jr. realised IBM had to do something about it. He hired Eliott Noyes, an already famous design consultant, who developed a corporate design program bringing consistency throughout all IBM touchpoints with customers. Later Noyes brought in many other designers and architects, who contributed to make IBM the successful IT company of the end of the 20th century. Even before Apple built their stunning Apple Park in Cupertino, Eero Saarinen designed the Thomas J. Watson Research Center to enable collaboration and make easier interaction among researchers, surrounded by an inspiring view. Putting aside the advanced-technology IBM was offering to its customers, the organization was operating in a way that made business successful, attracting the best talents, retaining the best employees, and ultimately gaining customers’ loyalty.

Good business is not only about profitability, but also the outcome of many factors. We suggest below some questions you might ask yourself when considering using Design power as good business:

- How should design appear to your shareholders and stakeholders to succeed financially?
- How does design management contribute to the company societal and sustainable corporate value (ESG, BCorp, SDG ...)?

**Figure 3**

*Designence 2.0 model – Combination: Design as Good Business with Vision or Mission*
c. Design as Transformer
(Figure 4)

While Design is being adopted more easily by large corporations, it is also creating some tensions into organizations. Often considered as unmanageable, sort of free electron in the system, designers are simply looking at problems from a different perspective. Their creative way of thinking driven by their intuitive form of intelligence is struggling into organizations that are mainly driven by analytical thinkers. There are several types of intelligence and no hierarchy. Designers and other functions just need to learn to work together like with any other capability inside the organization.

Designer’s specific set of skills, including their capability to empathize, to observe, their talent to thrive in complex environment, collaborating with other functions, demonstrating agility as much as their appetite for taking risks, represent strong assets to leverage, especially in organizations that need to transform themselves.

Some questions below can help exploring design as a transforming power. It might involve the HR department as much as gaining leadership support. Designers are not business saviors, but they can bring a lot especially in time of change to support with a different way of thinking:

- Do you have a brand strategy with clear standards?
- How do you leverage design
to manage change?

- How design skills transform the company capacities and knowledge capital in the long-term?
- Does design strategy work on improving employee experience?

**d. Design as Integrator** (Figure 5)

Finally, Design as Integrator is particularly addressing leaders with an analytical and therefore a Cartesian mindset. The inclusive nature of design makes it a strong asset for companies looking for growth through transformation. The necessary changes to operate transformation require to integrate new processes or sometimes adapt them to gain in efficiency, to be faster or simpler to implement. It can also affect the organization business model, its structure, its profitability scheme.

Becoming an effective mission driven company, or even a B Corp certified organization, involves newset of competencies, adopting new way of working, integrating new operating models, aligning company purpose and good wills. Designers’ capability to observe, adapt, build on, iterate, test, learn and prototype are essential to support organizations in such a journey.

Questions below are a good start when embarking in unknown territories. Bring a designer with you and understand how he integrates in the system, discover how he analyzes the situation and let yourself see through his eyes, he might see things from a radical new perspective and help you to solve your challenges in new ways.

- How does design processes to make them customer centric?

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**Figure 5**

Designence 2.0 model – Combination with Design as Integrator and Vision or Mission

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Strategic design for a responsible future - Designence model explained
• How does design help reduce time to market for new product development?
• Does it help optimize conversation between Marketing and R&D functions, between branding and R&D functions?
• Is Design Thinking approach integrated in the decision-making processes?

Now that you can visualize the physical representation of the model, let’s explain how it works and share guidance on the way we combine these 4 powers to bring to life Design as a strategic tool.
From powerful combinations to powerful solutions

When facing a complex challenge, a leader can either face it entirely or slice it down into smaller bites and less complex problems. With Designence 2.0, we offer to follow a similar approach and help you to break down your challenge while making it easier to crack and of course, leveraging Design capability as a strategic tool.

Follow us step by step and learn how these combinations can help you move forward while adopting new ways of managing, processing, operating, enabling, inspiring your people, your customers, your users.

First, let’s split the toolbox in two parts.

The first one includes all the combinations aiming at building the Vision to solve your business challenge (Figure 6). The second part corresponds to all the combinations related to the Mission and therefore the operations to implement the solution (Figure 7).

Technically, when looking at a 3D cube you can only see three sides of it at the same time. If you keep the Vision side on the top, you can create six combinations only. These combinations represent a set of strategies you can explore to solve your problem. It is the same if you look at the cube always keeping the Mission visible. The four other Powers can combine by two and create a new set of operations to deploy the strategy selected earlier.

Some might argue we could create combinations of three Design powers. We explored this route which we found too complex and instead of helping to solve the problem, it was making it too complicated to crack. And once again, we cannot physically see three sides of a cube at the same time.

Others asked us why combining two Design powers together instead of picking one only. Practicing the manipulation of the cube, and based on the cases that supported us to validate our model, we believe combining two powers increases the possibility of looking at the challenge from different angles and was enriching the discussions.

In the following pages (Figure 8 and 9) we share tables that provide examples of different outcomes related to each of these Vision and Mission combinations. There are not exhaustive but instead, give you an idea of the way the combinations are helping to slice down the problem into more actionable activities. In a nutshell, the process follows the double diamond shape, divergent and then convergent phases, of the Design Thinking approach.
These six combinations lead to different types of strategy to help you tackle your business challenges from different angles.
These six combinations lead to different types of activity to implement a meaningful action plan and follow-up your roadmap efficiently.
**Figure 8: Vision combinations examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination explanation</th>
<th>Strategy example</th>
<th>Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead a transformation that differentiates your company from main competitors</td>
<td>Simplify your portfolio to be more customer centric</td>
<td><strong>APPLE</strong> portfolio of products in 1997 was cut by half when Steve Jobs took back the control of the company. Still, Steve and Jonathan Ive focused on what made the distinctiveness of Apple’s products in every device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiate your company purpose from competition by integrating new processes, new business models or new capabilities</td>
<td>Adopt creative methods and capabilities to innovate</td>
<td><strong>PROCTER &amp; GAMBLE</strong>, under Claudia Kotchka, VP of Design Innovation &amp; Strategy, created Clay Street, a design thinking capability to accelerate the innovation process within the organization, bringing multi-disciplinary teams from all over the world to co-create new products, services or solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce on costs without compromising on your design to increase your profitability</td>
<td>Reduce total cost of production of an existing product while making it distinctive</td>
<td><strong>DECATHLON</strong> developed a new headlight reducing number of parts by 5 and enabling production in Europe thanks to the design team intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow your brand globally adopting new ways of doing business while addressing people’s unmet need</td>
<td>Become a B Corp certified company</td>
<td><strong>PATAGONIA</strong>, through his founder Yvon Chouinard and his organization, has adopted a radical new type of governance, purposely driven by giving 100% of its profits after company investment to protect the planet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer a price competitive new product and service with a radically different approach</td>
<td>Reconsider the business model with customers purchase barriers in mind</td>
<td><strong>PHILIPS</strong> developed not only a product but a service. The solution focused on the definition, development and implementation of a subscription service that allows consumers to access an Intense Pulsed Light device at home and benefit from personalised support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring in new partners products to solve a customer centric problem</td>
<td>Aggregate several capabilities from partners to develop innovative customer centric solutions</td>
<td><strong>GOAL MAMA</strong> is offering a technology-based tool to facilitate connections between nurses and patients (mostly young mothers) adopting a human centric approach to make a digital tool more human</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Earth is now our only shareholder.

A Letter from Yvon Chouinard
Figure 9: Mission combinations examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination explanation</th>
<th>Operation example</th>
<th>Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiator + Transformer</td>
<td>Create a strong differentiation from your competitors, thanks to an innovative approach focused on customers’ unmet needs</td>
<td>ALSTOM worked with a creative partner that helped to understand customers’ journey and led to a redesign of the architecture of the train. The integration of new approach and collaborative work helped to transform the working habits of the project teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiator + Integrator</td>
<td>Consolidate a leading position, consistently innovating with addressing customers’ frustration while protecting your design</td>
<td>DYSON consistently brings new solutions in each of their product lines thanks to observation, design contest and strong IP protection of their innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiator + Good Business</td>
<td>Leverage your difference amplifying what makes you unique and expand your business stretching your brand into new territories</td>
<td>OPINEL is a famous folding knife with more than 130 years of legacy. They outreach their traditional pocket knife market to new categories. From colourful kitchen knives it increased their brand status and their presence in daily household activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Business + Integrator</td>
<td>Innovate and partner with an ecosystem of suppliers to offer sustainable products that address SDG goals and keep the business ahead of its competitors</td>
<td>CARREFOUR has developed a set of new products called “Les incroyables” (the unbelievables) including toys made of recycled cardboard, BBQ, backpacks for grocery shopping made of recycled plastic, folding desks to ease mobility, a customizable backpack for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Business + Transformer</td>
<td>Observe new travel behaviors from other industry sectors to offer a radically different solution</td>
<td>AIRBNB disrupted the hospitality sector applying design mindset to leverage the sharing economy business model while addressing customer’s unmet needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformer + Integrator</td>
<td>Integrate sales processes and methods with the support of a new subscription formula and the implementation of a circular economy logic</td>
<td>PHILIPS has integrated new sales processes with the support of a new subscription formula to help access a product usually not affordable to low-income customers. They also implemented a circular economy logic, and a new business model enabled by design thinking and experimental design upstream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opinel differentiation strategy mixing its savoir-faire, quality reputation, heritage and colorful trends to add modernity and uniqueness to its brand.
Brigitte Borja de Mozota

Brigitte is DMI Life Fellow since 2004. She is an honorary professor in business at Université Paris X, co-founder of the European Academy of Design, and an editorial member The Design Journal. Her research focus on the strategic value of design with the Designence model transformed into the Annual Design value Index with design leaders. Currently she works on design and social innovation, mental health, and aging (UQAM). She teaches Strategic Design Management at Strate in France and at SRH mobile university in Germany.

Hervé Collignon

Hervé is an experienced design manager and consultant in Innovation and Design Thinking methodology, with over 30 years of experience in multinational companies and in the creative industry in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. As the CEO and founder of HOOKS Strategy & Innovation, he has collaborated with clients from various industry sectors to integrate human-centered innovation into their organizations.

Steinar Valade-Amland

Steinar is a seasoned professional with a diverse background, including leadership roles in design-focused manufacturing and a stint as the CEO of a prominent brand design agency in Copenhagen. Formerly the Managing Director of the Association of Danish Designers, he now operates as an independent consultant through Three Point Zero. Specializing in the creative industries, he serves as the Head of Strategy and Business Development for a global design consultancy.
Acknowledgments

Strategic Design For A Responsible Future has been a long journey. Like any design project, it represents long hours of discussions, of debates, of disagreements, of convergence and at the end, it is a summary of our thoughts which we believe will change the way Design is perceived and used.

This is the outcome of many contributors, usually those who share the same passion and objective and that believe design discipline has a bigger role to play for future generations.

This document is an extract of Chapter 3 of the book that contains many more cases and interviews on how to use the model.

Finally, design thinking is a framework developed to ensure C-suite endorsement of the pursuit of design excellence in all actions undertaken by the organization. Design management is a rigorous and strategically anchored mechanism to capitalize on the investment in design as intellectual capital. And design - as we’ve always known it is the skills, methods and creative capabilities needed to embody ideas and direction.

Design embodies, design thinking inspires, design management enables, strategic design leads.

Want to explore deeper our DESIGNENCE 2.0 model?
Order one of our three versions of the book:

A deluxe version that includes the wooden cube, nine case studies and is enriched with nine business leader interviews (available from our website www.bestrategicdesign.com)

A standard Print On Demand version that includes five case studies and five business leaders interviews on Amazon

An ebook version that includes as well five case studies and five business leaders interviews also available from our website
People only accept change when they are faced with necessity, and only recognize necessity when a crisis is upon them.

Jean Monnet

founding father of the European Union
These pages are an extract of Strategic Design For a Responsible Future that explains Designence model. Our purpose is to help integrate strategic design and stimulate innovation in your organization as an ongoing and integral dialogue between complementary skills, bridging mind and matter, image and identity.

This book inspires next gen leadership to achieve best-in-class results by integrating Design strategies into organizational culture.”

David Kusuma, President, World Design Organization

“Strategic Design for a Responsible Future” written by a group of the most influential thinkers in the domain of Design Management, is a comprehensive roadmap, a compilation of resources and best practices, and a toolbox of proven methodologies and approaches with which to tackle some of our most pressing challenges. It is sure to become a touchstone, helping leaders in all endeavors marshal the forces of Design, Design Thinking, and Design Management for transformative, meaningful, and sustainable change.”

Carole Bilson, President, Design Management Institute

“Strategic Design for a Responsible Future is an engaging and educational tool that allows us to understand, through examples and projects, the importance of the design approach and design mindset within organizations. It demonstrates that design is a critical factor in transforming practices, processes, innovations, and thus a lever for the competitiveness and sustainability of businesses.”

Emmanuel Thouan, President, Agence pour le Promotion de la Creation Industrielle