

Change by design

How design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation.

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The myth of innovation is that brilliant ideas leap fully formed from the minds of geniuses. In reality, most innovations are borne from rigor and discipline. Breakthrough ideas—whether for a new bicycle, an advertising campaign, a treatment plan for diabetes, or a program aimed at tackling the national obesity epidemic—emerge not by chance, but by studying and embracing the immediate challenges we encounter every day in our offices and homes, laboratories and hospitals, classrooms and conference rooms, and in all the spaces in between. We don't simply realize solutions; we design them.

Design thinking is valuable not just in so-called creative industries or for people tasked with designing products. Rather, it is often most powerful when applied to abstract, multifaceted problems: improving a guest experience at a hotel, encouraging bank customers to save more or developing a compelling narrative for a public service campaign. It has been used by organizations such as Nokia to rethink global gaming and by the Department of Energy to encourage conservation. Design thinking is now being applied to address a wide range of issues and concerns, from the delivery of clean drinking water in the developing world to improving the efficacy of airport security and microfinancing.