

THE CHALLENGE

A school district wishes to become more innovative. We have to figure out what that means. We may have our perspectives on what innovation means, which are important, but with design, we have to deeply understand our clients perspectives - remember that design is rooted in empathy for those we are designing for. We may use our perspectives about innovation to initially guide us, but ultimately, we cannot let those ideas become a bias associated with our work. We must first understand what our client believes innovative means.

Discovery: Conduct ethnography to understand the landscape of the school district. We want to uncover their current reality around innovation. We might conduct the following:

Evaluation of any pre-existing documentation surrounding the school, state report card, website, etc.

Survey work

Interviews with teachers, administrators, students, parents on what it innovation looks like and means

Observations of the schools in the district

Visitations with the client to innovative companies and industries to enlarge the vision of innovation

Define: in the define stage, we examine all of the patterns and trends apparent from the data from Discovery. This analysis will lead us to our Point of View statement (POV)

Actionable problem statement: POV

Through our discovery activities, we would capture the current experience of the schools. We could also understand through our various techniques what they thought innovation might be.

Our data might tell us that the learning experience was not very innovative. For example, we might see a great deal of passive learning, with students sitting and listening to teachers. We see that they could improve here.

At this point, and through our analysis, our design team believes that the school system can become a more innovative school district by creating a new type of learning experience for students.

We vette this with the school district to be sure we perceived correctly and if this could be a potential course of action. If they agree, we are ready to establish our Point of View statement.

Our point of view statement becomes:

The Anytown School District wishes to develop more innovative schools through the creation of next-generation learning experiences for students.

For this challenge, we'll want to clearly define what an innovative school district is: this unpacks the POV and gives us a deeper framework to which to ideate around. After Discovery, our focus, or our POV, frames that innovation can be achieved through next-generation learning.

We add the following statements as design drivers for developing innovative schools and for next-generation learning.

- An innovative school district based in next-generation learning continually adapts to shifting conditions of what learning can be.
- An innovative school district based in next-generation learning provides students with choice and agency to make decisions on their own.
- An innovative school district based in next-generation learning creates authentic learning experiences that connect students with issues that matter
- An innovative school district based in next-generation learning embraces a culture of continuous learning.

Again, we vette these with the school district. Do these make sense to you and did we capture these correctly?

Note that we are defining characteristics of innovation rather than specific strategies to be innovative. That's next.

We'll use the POV to provide a framework for ideation.

Ideate:

In this phase, since we understand what innovation is in the context of next-generation learning, and why we want to become innovative, it's time to create ideas that can support the realization of actually becoming more innovative.

Note: your discovery will help here and lead you to potential ideas: you may have noticed classrooms are dated, you may have uncovered that teachers do have ideas about how to become innovative, but their ideas never go beyond the classroom. You may see that the district offers low-level technology training, and so on.

To structure ideation, we use **How Might We** statements to initiate the development of potential ideas about what the district could do to support next-generation learning and as a result, become more innovative.

How might we:

- Redo curriculum, instruction and assessment in order to become more innovative?
- Recreate learning spaces in order to become more innovative?
- Develop an Innovation incubator in order to become more innovative?
- Develop an innovative coaching program in order to become more innovative?
- Develop business-industry partnerships in order to become more innovative?
- Rethink the hiring process in order to become more innovative?

Prototype:

We may choose to create a series of prototypes or could we combine these into several prototype programs. We ask the district which they would like to select.

They choose the hiring process, with the rationalization that if you hire more innovative people, you'll become more innovative.

The Prototype: create a hiring design charrette to see how potential candidates work together to create innovative solutions to an important challenge the district has (we naturally would use "how to become more innovative"). From our understanding of what innovation means to the district, we'll develop a set of metrics to evaluate how groups of candidates work together.

Test:

We enlist the help of 30 education majors from a local college to do a beta design charette to test the idea. We conduct the event, and use the data to improve our initial ideas so that we are ready to go with real candidates.

We get all real candidates together on a Saturday, create a design studio in a school library, and conduct the charette. We assign an administrator to each group to evaluate. Groups will have an opportunity to use the design process to develop a solution to a challenge and then present that.

Admin teams debrief and make recommendations. This process would inform other aspects of the hiring process.

Admins also discuss the value of the hiring design charette? What worked and what didn't? This information is used to either discard the program (it was an abject failure) or to improve it for the next hiring cycle.

