

Service Lab Framework

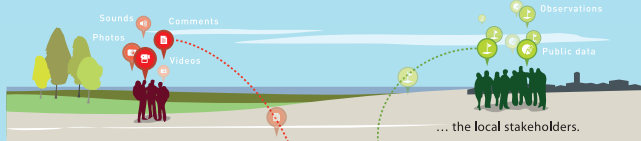
There once was a client who wanted to involve local stakeholders in the co-design of public services. Here is how the User Studio agency helped them.

HELLO! First contact

The USER STUDIO team makes contact with 3 local stakeholders whom the client has recommended to better understand the topic to be explored during the project.

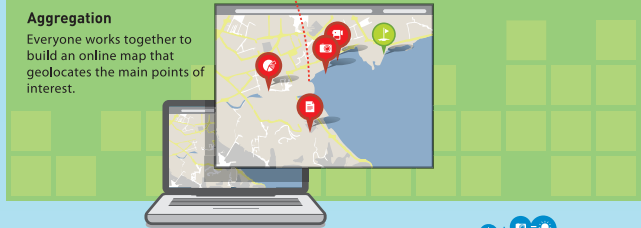
1 Immersion

The USER STUDIO team goes to meet...



Aggregation

Everyone works together to build an online map that geolocates the main points of interest.



2 Co-creation

After 3 days of immersion and meeting people, the USER STUDIO team organises a creative workshop. A dozen local stakeholders are invited to brainstorm, using the data collected on the map as inspiration.



Analysis

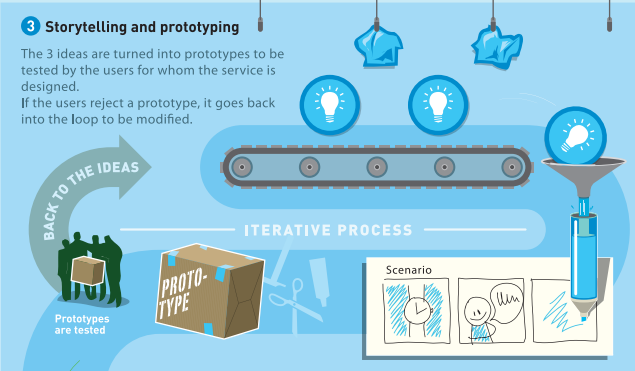
The participative map gathering the points of interest and the illustrated ideas are shown to a larger public to select 3 ideas that will be transformed into scenarios.



3 Storytelling and prototyping

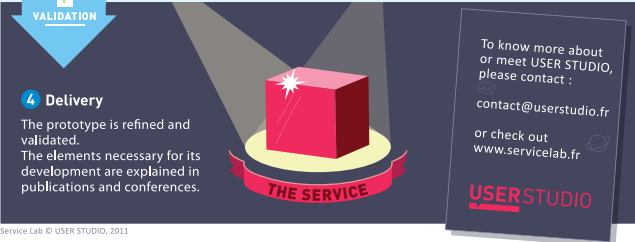
The 3 ideas are turned into prototypes to be tested by the users for whom the service is designed.

If the users reject a prototype, it goes back into the loop to be modified.



4 Delivery

The prototype is refined and validated. The elements necessary for its development are explained in publications and conferences.



Creating a Framework for Organisations New to Service Design

How Service Lab Can Introduce Local Governments to User-Centred Innovation Methods

Working for organisations that have no prior experience in using design-led approaches to develop their services can present a challenge for service design practitioners. Of the four steps commonly used in a service design approach – discovery, ideation, prototyping and implementation – the first two, discovery and ideation, are often abstract for the client organisation until initial results emerge. Using the example of ‘Service Lab’, a design framework created for local governments by Paris-based practice User Studio, this article aims to explain how creating a sector-specific framework may acclimate client organisations that do not traditionally employ user-centered innovation methods.

In 2009, User Studio carried out service design work for several local governments in France as part of an experimental program, partly funded by the European Union, to help design public policy. We faced an immediate test: the local governments were unaccustomed to the approach used by designers. They were noticeably unclear about the initial phases, which included ethnographic research to identify the users’ needs and to help us frame the problem, and also about co-design workshops with various stakeholders to generate ideas and solutions.

For example, having sixteen-year-old students suggest better uses for the library space in their school was unexpected in a setting more used to a top-down approach in policy making.

This flexible, non-linear phase that designers are comfortable with when starting projects was perceived by public sector managers as lacking a structure and a predictable outcome. We were concerned that this phase would be undervalued by organisations that focus on minimising risk.



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is a Franco-American service designer and co-founder of USER STUDIO, a French service innovation and design consultancy. Having advised Orange, EDF, Lyonnaise des Eaux and the 27th Region, a public innovation lab for the 26 French regions, Matthew focuses on how a design-led approach may inform strategy.

Reassuring the Client Organisation

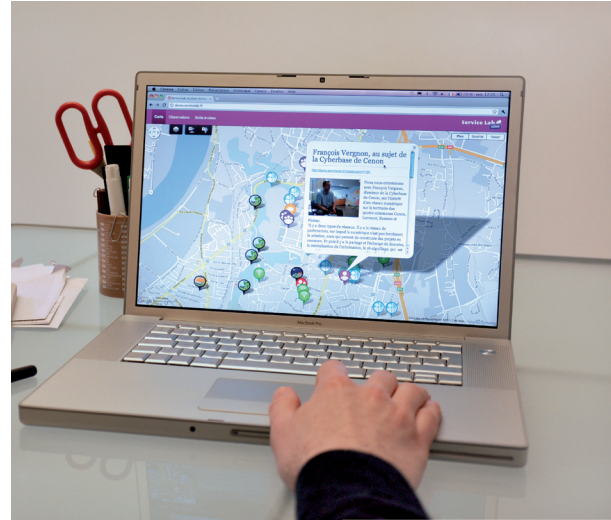
Our response was to create the Service Lab framework for local governments, a series of tools that translates the service design steps of discovery and ideation into a roadmap that civil servants can quickly visualise. This relies heavily on tools that are custom made for the specific city, district or greater region, such as an online regional map, which we dubbed the ‘Observation Map’, to compile user insights gathered during the discovery phase. We also devised an illustration tool with pictograms, the “Crayon Box’, to give stakeholders – from elected officials to local residents – a common language to communicate their ideas during co-design workshops.

How the Tools Work

The Observation Map is an online application using the Google Maps API that allows the design team to rapidly geolocate any input relevant to the study, such as landmarks, stakeholder interviews, key players and recurrent themes. This allows stakeholders at every level to view how the project is progressing in real time, demystifying the research phase and involving public managers straight from the start.

The insights collected in the discovery phase help us frame which problems need to be resolved by the creative workshops. We generally invite about ten people to a workshop and split them into groups of three or four, each with a member of the design team.

Once brainstorming begins, the Crayon Box facilitates self-expression, adding a game-like feeling to the exercise. An online application run on an iPad, it allows participants to sketch out their service ideas using custom-made pictograms relevant to the project’s central theme. A split screen offers a choice of pictograms – often



1.

organised in categories such as people, urban infrastructure or seasons – on the right and a symbolic urban setting on the left. Participants select which symbols best represent their ideas and place them on the miniature urban scene. In one example, we created pictograms representing the Garonne river and a radio broadcasting station for a workshop in the southwestern region of France focusing on local media.



2.

The result resembles a stylised postcard of urban scenery that is placed on the regional map used in the previous phase. This allows public managers to visualise the relationship between stakeholders’ insights and potential solutions in specific streets or neighbourhoods.

An elected official, who was key to one project, told us, “This Crayon Box allows me to understand what my constituents want even if I am unable to attend the workshop.”

Others participants felt that a visual representation of their ideas added value to their contributions, creating ‘buy-in’ for local stakeholders around a common vision. They were thus more inclined to back the project to completion.

The design team working with students in a high school in the Champagne-Ardenne region in France





ServiceLab.fr

The roadmap and tools of the Service Lab framework are presented on the commercial website: www.servicelab.fr. This includes a demonstration version that viewers can try out for themselves before deciding whether to invest: a feature that has reassured some public-sector managers.

Design jobs traditionally involve custom-made roadmaps and tools designed for a specific project. Service Lab takes a different stance, offering a standardised framework that can be adapted to specific situations. Pictograms, for example, can be easily designed to suit the local context.

If traditional design contracts can be thought of as 'haute couture', think of Service Lab as 'prêt-à-porter', a standard model adjusted according to each client's needs. Of the two approaches, Service Lab has proven more accessible for clients new to the idea of service design.

Designing a Framework

In testing Service Lab in three small to mid-sized French cities, we have learned

several lessons about how to develop a service design framework:

- Identifying recurring themes or problems common to client organisations in the same sector offers a business opportunity for developing a service design framework that may be used on different projects (eg. a framework for health care, education, etc.)
- Adapting the framework to the client organisation's own language increases the client's receptiveness
- Remember to practise what you preach: apply design principles to your own working methods and tools, so the product is both desirable and accessible to the client organisation

It's About Reducing Risk

Devising a framework can be win-win situation for both the client organisation and the design agency. It involves and reassures clients straight from the start and gives the design team a product they can replicate in future jobs, as successful trial and error increases its efficiency and minimises risk. ●

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1. The 'Observation Map' | 2. Custom-made smartphone application designed to send photos taken during the discovery phase directly to the 'Observation Map' | 3. Participants use the 'Crayon Box' during a creative workshop | 4. Service idea illustrations made with the 'Crayon Box'