



Lean.
Excellence.
Design.

**Bringing it all together - how
'Service Design', 'Service
Excellence' and 'Lean'
methodologies can combine to**

enhance the student and staff experience through a 'Customer-LED' (Lean, Excellence, Design) approach

Universities are large, complex, organisations where misunderstandings, miscommunications and confusion abound – even for people 'on the inside'. Often when we try to change how we do things we are unsure of where to start or which tool or technique is the best one to use.

This is why we have developed new a philosophy for service enhancement: Customer-LED, where we bring together the best of three methodologies: Lean, Service Design and Service Excellence.

For largely historical and legacy reasons, services are often delivered by teams who sit firmly in their own silos, with isolated activities and jargon-heavy communications that need to be pulled together and interpreted in order to be understood by the end-user of the service – be they students, or others outside of the institution.

There is real value to be found when an organisation can make the connection across all its various teams between people (front-facing or not) who impact on the end-user experience. There can be a lot of effort spent on reviewing processes solely from the business perspective and not enough time spent understanding the map of the service journey from the user viewpoint. By bringing together people from across an organisation to build up a map of the end-user journey you can get insights into the 'pain points' in that service and find efficiencies.

One way to throw light on how the individual pieces of the service jigsaw fit together to meet end-user needs, is by taking a human-centred view of the service delivery, working with students and staff as partners and co-designers, capturing their frustrations, anxieties, challenges and triumphs. Journey mapping using blueprinting, student personas and storyboarding both supports and helps to re-engage students whilst making systems and processes more user-focused and results in more efficient and effective organisational systems and structures.

Firstly, there needs to be an acknowledgment of who the customer/beneficiary is. All change and improvement needs to be done with them firmly in mind to ensure that what is being delivered is what the customer needs, when the customer needs it and in the way that they need it. By creating a relationship with the customer in order to understand their wants, needs and experience, from here we can determine improvements that need to be made or set expectations around what will and will not be delivered.

Once we understand the customer expectations and experience we can then start to look at how we deliver to the customer today by analysing current working processes and practices; highlighting issues with how things are working and identifying their root cause. By identifying issues (or 'pain points') that are raised which are stopping or making it difficult for us to deliver the right service to our customer we can prevent them from occurring again – cutting out activities that do not add value from the customers' perspective nor help us to deliver what is needed.

With the elimination of waste, we now have processes and practices that are delivering value to the customer. However, how easy are we making it for us to do this? Pressure is put on staff when resources do not match the demand or where we are "force fitting" work to set processes. By looking at end-user needs (or customer 'pull') we can align processes and resources to meet customer demand. This way we are able to easily cope with the volume, frequency and differences that are needed.

It would be wonderful if once processes and practices were effectively and efficiently delivering customer needs that we could sit back and relax! However, nothing stays the same and we work in an ever-changing environment whether for political, legislative, technological, customer needs etc. reasons. Staff need to have the capability and the capacity to constantly review what they do to ensure that it always delivers what the customer needs, when the customer needs it and in the way that they need it.

If you can embed a service mind-set into your culture, your staff will make sure every interaction with customers or service users is a great experience. Empathy, courtesy, friendliness, respect, ownership all become part of the 'way things are done around here'. Developing exceptional interpersonal skills and being more aware of your impact on others is the glue that drives service excellence.

When we get it right and deliver excellent services designed with our users in mind, we will consistently meet expectations. Service excellence is achieved when expectations are exceeded and we make every interaction a 'moment of truth' – superb handling of these moments often requires an instinctive response that puts people's emotional needs first, every time.

The customer-LED approach will only be fully successful when those who do the job work with end-users to understand and to improve the service delivery or process; taking staff out of their silos, helping them to see the bigger picture of how to bring it all together.