

Using design to innovate more effectively in the healthy ageing sector

Lessons from
experts, investors
and entrepreneurs

October 2021



in partnership with:

About us

UK Research & Innovation

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) brings together the UK's world leading research with business to meet the major industrial and societal challenges of our time. It provides funding and support to UK businesses and researchers, part of the government's £4.7 billion increase in research and development over the next four years. It plays a central role in the government's modern industrial strategy. Find out more at: www.ukri.org

Centre for Ageing Better

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In less than 20 years, one in four people will be over 65. The fact that many of us are living longer is a great achievement. But unless radical action is taken by government, business and others in society, millions of us risk missing out on enjoying those extra years. At the Centre for Ageing Better we want everyone to enjoy later life. We create change in policy and practice informed by evidence and work with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities. We are a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the government's What Works Network.

Creative Venue / Healthy Ageing by Design

Creative Venue advise on design strategies to accelerate growth for entrepreneurs, corporates, investors and stakeholders in the healthy ageing market. As founders of the Innovate UK funded Design Age Accelerator and Healthy Ageing by Design campaign they're committed to motivate business and designers to make the UK become world leaders in healthy ageing solutions.



1 in 4

people will be
over 65 by 2040

Image credit - front
cover: University of
Manchester

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Jim Newbery, Director, Codebase

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Ben Wilkins, CEO, Good Boost

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Background

In 2017 UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) launched the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, with £98 million invested in the challenge on Healthy Ageing. The Healthy Ageing Challenge supports the government's Ageing Society Grand Challenge for people to enjoy five more years of healthy, independent living by 2035 while narrowing the gap between the experience of the richest and the poorest. To achieve this, the Challenge asks industry and researchers to develop and deliver products, services and business models that will be adopted at scale to support people as they age. This will allow people to remain active, productive, independent and socially connected across generations for as long as possible.

The Centre for Ageing Better was commissioned by UKRI to develop the Healthy Ageing Challenge Framework to stimulate ideas and provide thinking points, and to deliver a Community of Practice to support the Healthy Ageing Challenge. The Community of Practice is a learning community that brings together organisations with an interest in developing solutions that support people to age well. It is a space for members to collaborate, problem-solve and share their expertise, learnings and insights, through activities which include workshops, conferences and an online resource library.



£98m

invested in
healthy ageing

Foreword

Dr Cynthia Bullock, Deputy Director,
UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge



Design is critical to shape a world-leading healthy ageing sector

Older people, like everyone else, want and need innovative, attractive, and affordable products and services. It is estimated that the over 50s hold 68% of all UK household wealth and the longevity economy is forecast to grow to around €5.7 trillion in the European Union alone by 2025. This shows that there's significant commercial benefit for innovators and entrepreneurs to design products and services specifically for older people.

Evidence shows that the embedding of design principles in the innovation process is not happening effectively for the healthy ageing market. The result is the failure of these products and services to be widely adopted or to become sustainable propositions. Design capabilities in the innovation process is not a 'nice-to-have', it is absolutely critical. It allows the innovators to put older people's aspirations and needs at the heart of their innovation process and the result will be products and services that are stylish, attractive, accessible and useable.

The Healthy Ageing Challenge team are committed to helping businesses, including social enterprises, to recognise the value of design. This programme is a great opportunity to do that and shape the delivery of new, scalable, and sustainable innovative solutions.

Introduction: Tackling the design challenge

For some of the start-up and scale-up projects currently working in the Healthy Ageing domain, but particularly with those who plan to bid for future funding, embedding design effectively in the development of their products and services is a key area of development and crucial for their future success.

The design growth programme was delivered in partnership between the UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge Community of Practice and design industry leaders, Creative Venue. Between June and September 2021, a programme of activity was rolled out to increase the understanding of design amongst solution providers in the healthy ageing market.

The programme of events drew on experiences and expertise from leaders in the design industry, investors, and innovators who showcased the impact of effective design. It explored perception, use and value of design in the healthy ageing market. The programme received strong feedback, with 100% of workshop participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that it had helped them develop or progress their project.

This report describes the key insights and learnings from the programme. It aims to enable members of the Healthy Ageing Challenge Community of Practice and individuals and organisations in the sector to benefit from the rich lessons in design this programme delivered and use design strategically in their work as a result.

A definition of human-centred design

“All design should be human centred, it’s as simple as that. And I mean human-centred, not ‘user-centred’ or ‘user-friendly’, because users are human beings after all. But, more importantly, because being human-centred is not just about your user. Human-centred design takes into account every single human being that your design decisions impact on.”
David Townson, Design Council design associate.

100%



100% of workshop participants agreed or strongly agreed that it had helped them develop or progress their project.

Three big design questions

Creative Venue's work with entrepreneurs and Design Age Accelerator surveys has demonstrated there are three key factors around design that entrepreneurs find particularly challenging:

- 1 How design is perceived
- 2 How design is used
- 3 How design is valued

The programme addressed these three key factors head on and this report investigates each subject.



Image credit: Design Council, Transform Ageing

Innovate UK's Design Innovation strategy

Ben Griffin, Innovation Lead – Design, UK Research & Innovation

The benefits of new ideas – for the economy, for people and for the planet – can only be realised if those ideas are adopted and used by people. Technology can make new ideas possible, but it's people that determine whether or not they succeed.

It is not sufficient for new products or services to be technically capable, they must also be desirable, useful, and frustration-free. Design provides a human-centred approach, and tools and expertise to help innovators achieve that. Businesses can use design to understand customer behaviour and translate that insight into new ideas. The design process encourages fast and frequent testing of ideas, building confidence in the direction of travel and making it more likely that solutions will be adopted and, therefore, create value.

At Innovate UK, we believe that innovation outcomes could be accelerated and improved if more companies adopted a people-centred design approach from the start. Our [Design in Innovation Strategy](#) highlights that opportunity and sets out the approach we'll take to make it happen.

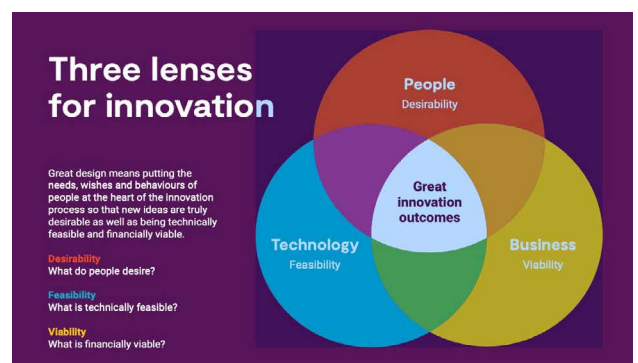
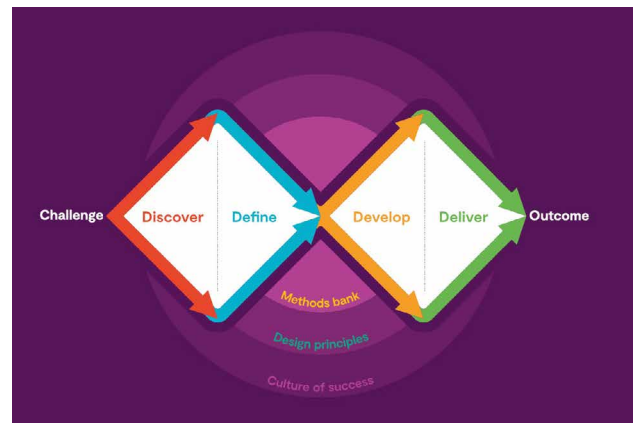


Image credit: Innovate UK Design Innovation strategy

Why focus on design?

For entrepreneurs, innovators or researchers striving to develop and deliver successful products or services for the healthy ageing market, embedding design in their work is a pre-requisite.

A poll at the Programme's launch webinar showed 62% of attendees perceived design as an essential ingredient for their business – however they didn't perceive design as a helpful way of improving their product or service experience. Whilst the benefits of using design to co-design with their users were recognised, only 28% of participants viewed design as essential to winning funding, highlighting the lack of understanding of the strategic role design plays in business growth. The overriding message of the programme is that design is not a 'nice-to-have' – it is mandatory if entrepreneurs are serious about developing innovative and disruptive solutions to exploit the healthy ageing market. The evidence for this is clear.

[Research from respected design industry analyst John Maeda](#), design partner at venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins shows that in Silicon Valley, designer-founded companies are among the most successful start-ups and firms "are increasingly seeing the value of designers who know how to work with and within the constraints of the tech industry".

Design is central to the UK's 2021 Innovation strategy, that makes clear design is core to successful innovation:

"Great design means putting the needs, wishes and behaviours of people at the heart of the innovation process, so that new ideas are truly desirable as well as being technically feasible and financially viable. Design brings ideas alive and makes them tangible, providing the impetus for growth and ultimately value to shareholders. Good design is for people and the planet, an increasingly critical focus. It is therefore very clear that in order to benefit from the UK national innovation strategy, businesses need to recognise and invest in design."

Innovate UK's design and innovation strategy highlights that 66% of UK firms are only at level one or two on the Design Ladder (the internationally recognised measure of design commitment) with either 'no design' or 'only using design as a final finish' in projects. The UK is behind Europe, despite having what many believe is the world's leading design industry.

Why do so many entrepreneurs fail to invest in design? Do they use design in an effective way? What value do they expect from design? There is clearly a lot of work to be done to convince senior decision-makers that design provides a raft of benefits from building capability, accelerating innovation and de-risking ventures. However, the evidence is compelling that design also presents a huge opportunity for solution providers. [McKinsey](#) reports that businesses who value design out-perform industry benchmark growth by 2 to 1, and the UK Design Council demonstrates a ROI of £7 for every £1 invested in design.

1. Lessons on the perception of design

To understand the perceptions of design, there are three primary questions to address:

- 1 What are the perceptions of design held by business?
- 2 Why are the perceptions of design holding businesses back?
- 3 How can the perceptions of design held by businesses be changed?

A key design challenge highlighted in the programme polling is that design is not viewed as strategic. Only 15% of attendees recognise the value of design in providing objective strategic thinking and 21% as a way to build team capability.

Whilst people do not directly see that design can be used for advice on their growth strategy, the good news is that 75% of attendees view design as something which can be used to prototype and test new ideas with customers and users. Additionally, almost 60% view using design to increase their investment potential, and most importantly, over 75% value design as offering connections to a community of collaborators and customers.

In understanding perceptions and overcoming misconceptions about design, a good starting point is to be clear on the definition of design, because design is often seen as part of innovation rather than a distinct contributor. It can be helpful not to use the ‘design’ word and instead talk about the activities that are associated with the design process such as empathy with customers, continuous iteration and idea visualisation.

In this context, the belief at the core of Innovate UK’s Design and Innovation strategy is that many businesses will benefit from a better understanding and use of human-centred design. As the name implies, human-centred design begins by viewing problems through the lens of people and their lives, rather than technology or engineering. According to Innovate UK’s research, cited in the strategy report, design provides the least value to businesses when it is used on an “ad-hoc basis”. It provides the most value when it is “integral to the business strategy and forms part of the cultural DNA of the organisation”.

Amongst the most common perceptions of design are that it is risky, slow and expensive.

15%

of attendees recognise the value of design in providing objective strategic thinking

1. Lessons on the perception of design

Perception 1: “Design is risky”

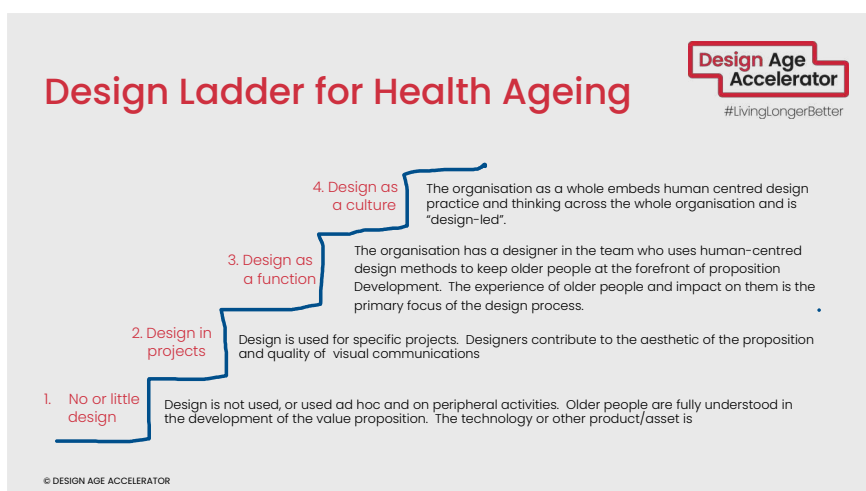
A perceived inability to measure the impact of design means entrepreneurs and investors don't understand the value design can bring and may view it as a risk. Design management is by definition segmented into generalists and specialists, different category disciplines (service, digital, systems, branding, etc.) and sector knowledge. All this means design is difficult to navigate and return on investment cannot be measured as directly as other functions such as operations, sales and marketing.

The perceived risks around design are partly because there is no single universally recognised industry standard to benchmark, as is available in architecture, engineering or accountancy. Related to this is the lack of in-house design capability in businesses, resulting in design often being outsourced to providers who can't be independently measured through a professional standards system or Trustmark-type ranking. Buying design is fraught with risk, and as a result many entrepreneurs opt to do it themselves as they perceive design to simply be common sense. This can be the biggest risk of all where entrepreneurs only hear what they want and aren't challenged in their thinking.

Questions abound around how the impact of design can be measured in a tangible way. These questions can be answered through independent measures such as patent applications, trademark registrations or brand valuation, alongside integration into existing management Key Performance Indicators such as speed to innovate, market growth, customer loyalty or employee motivation.

80% of participants told us that the programme had somewhat or greatly increased their perceptions of the importance of design, demonstrating that when the meaning of “design” and the case for design is unpacked, the real impact is understood and can be evaluated effectively.

Because design is embedded into a range of functions it can't be easily singled out, however industry-recognised design measurement systems have been developed by the Design Management Institute - [the Design Value Index and Design Maturity Matrix](#); the UK Design Council [Design Economy reports](#), and the [Design Ladder system](#), customised for the healthy ageing market by the Design Age Accelerator. The Design Business Association's established [design effectiveness awards programme](#) is a showcase of how design has made tangible impact on business growth.



The design ladder measures design impact highlighting steps a business needs to take on its design maturity journey

Perception 2: “Design is slow”

Challenges encountered in commissioning and managing the design process can lead to a perception that design slows down innovation. Issues in searching for design support abound, from an overwhelming breadth and diversity of types of design firms and no central directory or tool to find specialists. This leads to a reliance on word of mouth and a risk of poor commissioning, a lack of understanding around how designers price their work, how intellectual property is managed and how incentive models such as payment by results and sweat equity work.

Because many entrepreneurs believe design is simply good business process and common sense, they're convinced it will be faster to do it themselves or within their teams, saving time selecting and managing a design partner. Whilst there's a real need to build internal design capability in firms, this attitude can be short-sighted. Using in-house teams is often slower as people learn on the job, risking distraction and slowing core project work as a result.

Worse still, in start-ups and scale-ups, design is often delegated by time-poor leaders to inexperienced team members who may not have the skillset or toolbox to manage the design process. This results in leaders failing to recognise the insights themselves and to make strategic adjustments to their project. This mindset ultimately slows down innovation in contrast to effective partnering with designers that delivers rapid, independent and qualified insights.

Additionally, issues from selecting and managing design consultants, inconsistent use of design tools and processes, lack of an agreed design exit plan, an absence of a design evaluation plan and lack of leadership capacity means that even getting a design off

the starting blocks can be a slow, obstacle-ridden process.

However, a range of resources and tools are available to help establish the design process quickly and easily. Involving investors and using design bodies, referrals, networks and tools allows innovators to navigate the process with confidence, drawing on experience and expertise from trusted sources.

A good starting point is the Design Council's [six-part guide](#) featuring practical tips, advice and checklists for businesses investing in design and also: [The value of design for growing businesses](#). But how do you get that investment right? How do you choose the right designer at the right price? How will the designer get to grips with the complexities of your business? How can you communicate what you want when you're not quite sure yourself? How will you manage a designer and how will you assess whether what you get is 'good' design or not? These are questions businesses ask all the time about using design. This guide aims to help you answer them.

Perception 3: “Design is expensive”

For many innovators, user-centred co-design is regarded as common sense and therefore an unnecessary cost when they can do it themselves. Of course, it is important that innovators are central in the design process, and that design thinking is embedded into their ethos. However, leaders are likely to be wedded to their ideas and lack objectivity, and although they may have limited internal design capability, they should avoid leading the design process themselves.

1. Lessons on the perception of design

It is important leaders are invested in the process and participate with colleagues to understand knowledge gaps, challenge assumptions and identify where there is consensus or division amongst the team.

Return on investment in design activity can be measured objectively, as already highlighted, with tangible measures. However, it is also important that entrepreneurs recognise the intangible by-products of design that can turbo-charge a project or venture, such as access to domain experts, enhanced motivation or development of leadership capability.

Design is an investment, not a cost and should be regarded as such. To get the best value from it, design requires an investment of leadership time; an openness to challenging questions; a willingness to go back to the start of design development and question the brief. By making this investment, innovators can see rewards in the value of the independent, objective challenging perspective designers bring, and the additional advice, network connectivity, community and opportunity for collaboration.

70% of attendees valued design in order to better understand their target market, differentiate their product or service, prototype and test new ideas and make their product or service look better, showing just what a valuable investment design can represent.

The appointment of Chief Design Officers by fast growth firms is testimony to the belief that design is a highly valuable asset that demands expert guidance and curation to embed it into an organisation's culture.

What the experts said about their perceptions of design:

Centaur's Eric Khilstrom: "I don't see design as separate from our business - it's part of everything that we do. Everything starts with understanding the customer and take that away and we're nothing."

Adi Kasliwal, Co-founder of Personal Alarm Watch: "Our extensive design process ensured a successful launch, nurturing a community of customers that understand, value and feed back into our design led ethos. Design drives continuous improvement to help us to our goal of supporting millions of older people to stay independent."

Cat Drew, Design Council: "What we learnt from the Transform Ageing Programme - that design thinking needs to be used throughout and that design can be used to help reflect, learn and adapt throughout a programme of development."



70%

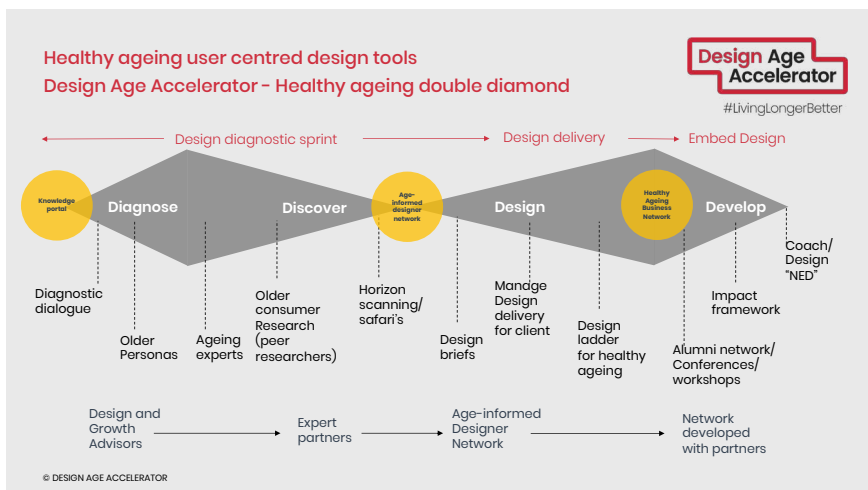
of attendees valued design to better understand their target market

2. Lessons on use of design

The UK is acknowledged to have a world-class design sector with an envied community of global design leaders in engineering, products, services and technology, such as James Dyson, Iain Callum and Jonny Ive to name three.

The irony is that this leadership position isn't recognised and exploited by many UK enterprises, particularly early stage start-ups and scale-ups who often don't place users at the heart of their idea. As a result, much of the UK's design sector revenues derive from international clients and global projects who do recognise the value of the UK design sector. The ability of UK designers to embrace multi-cultural viewpoints and diverse user needs makes them particularly insightful at creating seamless global user experiences for both products and services.

The principles of user-centred co-design have been championed by the UK Design Council and the use of some of its tools, including the 'Double Diamond' design process, have been accepted and adopted by design communities around the world. User experience design has been pioneered in the UK whilst systems design thinking - an understanding that to change the way things happen you need to look at their systemic implications - is currently in high demand.



The double diamond reduces risk by confirming the problem statement and engaging users before developing the solution

2. Lessons on use of design

To explore the lessons learnt on the use of design, there are three factors to watch out for:

1. Build capability

There is, generally, a lack of ability to build internal design capability within small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Employees may lack objectivity, real world insight and the confidence to challenge early-stage ideas. Too often the user problem is not properly defined and there has been insufficient, or inappropriate, interaction with intended users. Time is frequently committed to the development of 'perfect' prototypes rather than on feedback-led iterations and route-to-market discussions. It is unrealistic to expect operational staff to have the design skill set, so building capability must begin at the top, with the founders or leaders who carry the torch.

Herein lies one of the biggest barrier to using design: the leaders who don't bring designers into the process with a brief to question everything from the problem statement to the primary target audience. Ultimately, a leadership culture of bravery and open-mindedness to be challenged is key to embracing and investing in design.

"Use design to make the intangible, tangible."
**Dave Dunlop, Founder and CDO,
Else London.**

"Design can improve systems too. Understanding user needs from different perspectives and system requirements can help you understand the system boundaries and how to take advantage of that."
Anna Will – Frazer-Nash Consultancy.

2. Timing is everything

Busy leaders often see design as a luxury add-on and want to delegate its management, rather than seeing it as a strategic imperative that could help them fail faster or pivot to reshape their whole venture.

As a result, design is too often seen as a final touch, added at the end of the process, used tactically and too late - which is, ultimately, a poor return on investment. Too often, new product and service propositions fail because the design process is introduced too late in the final stages to allow for challenge, iteration and evolution to occur.

Projects that start with design succeed because the hard questions are asked before an idea has gone too far down the wrong road, when a proposition can be stress-tested in paper form. That's why venture capital backed start-ups talk to investors about their burn rate on soft-market testing, prototypes and minimum viable products before they venture into the market and start burning bigger marketing budgets. It's also the reason tech start-ups are obsessed with understanding users.

"Failure is part of the process of learning and regular feedback and testing is an intrinsic part of the design process."
Jo Blundell, Founder, Future Public.

3. Iterate to fail faster

In the UK enterprise failure is a stigma. In US business culture failure is acknowledged as a vital part of an entrepreneur's journey. Why? Because people learn more from their failures than from their successes. A less risk-averse approach from innovators would mean backing them to explore ideas for longer before they get into market with a flawed idea looking for a customer.

Businesses don't discount their wrong ideas fast enough and waste time and investment as a result. Business mythology says that there were over 10,000 Dyson prototypes before the final version was launched onto an unsuspecting market.

A mantra that's often replayed is that perfect is the enemy of the good. Business should undoubtedly strive for perfection – Apple being the ultimate case study – however design will help get an idea to a good enough point where it can be tried with users and then refined or flipped depending on their reactions.

“Products can be made better by design. Don't be afraid to iterate and challenge – and use your customers as your salespeople – there's no-one better.”

Steve Kuester, Founder-Simplistick.

Design insights

Some insights for effective design management include:

- **Peer Stories:** There is wide recognition of the value of peer stories and case studies with impact data. In particular, start-up entrepreneurs who can tell their stories – a narrative describing why they developed their particular product or service ideas – which grabs the attention of potential customers, investors and partners.
- **Consistent models:** Easy to apply design evaluation models enable a consistent approach to the way that design is both used and measured. A common use of process and tools by consultancies rather than a constant re-invention of the wheel helps first time design commissioners.
- **Process toolbox:** Easy to use and jargon free briefing tools from independent sources such as the Design Management Institute and Design Council will ensure enterprises get the design services they want and need in a timely and cost-efficient way.
- **Independent advice:** Entrepreneurs who take advantage of experienced design growth advice and coaching from an independent design advisor to help define the problem, scope the work, establish investment levels and select the appropriate designers have high chances of success.

2. Lessons on use of design

Case study: Memory Tracks - insight from the coal-face

Memory Tracks is an app which uses music at the point of care and is designed to help stimulate memory, manage agitation, assist with care, and support important daily routines through song-task association.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, founder Gordon Anderson had spent time with staff in care homes using Memory Tracks, to demonstrate the product and observe its use in order to inform future design development. This testing was adapted to a virtual interaction during the pandemic.

As a result of this engagement, Gordon and the Memory Tracks team have learnt that the greatest design challenges they need to overcome lie in not just the visual 'design' of the app, but are focused on designing the app to be integrated into existing systems and practices used by care givers and care homes, rather than being a separate care support tool.

Their qualitative research also demonstrated that ensuring the app was designed with an element of 'gamification', so that staff enjoyed using the product, was key to securing their sustained engagement and ongoing use of the app.

Memory Tracks is now talking to care home management and care software designers about future product development and developing an application programming interface or API which would allow the app's functionality to become integrated into existing systems.

In Gordon's words, "Our most valuable learning has been at the 'coal face' with care staff. It is only once we completely understand them and the challenges and issues they encounter during their caregiving that we can adapt our service design and allow them to get the full benefit from Memory Tracks."



“Our most valuable learning has been at the ‘coal face’ with care staff.”

Image credit: Design Council, Transform Ageing

3. Lessons on the value of design

Using, and demonstrating design as a driver of strategic growth is a key way to secure investment. However, not all investors are necessarily ‘design aware’ and to this end design needs to be invisibly interwoven into any pitch, to demonstrate the value of a user-centered design ethos in all aspects of the venture.

Good communication when pitching for investment is essential. Design your story to show you understand the problem you are solving, why it needs solving and who needs your solution.

“The kind of funding you target will have a direct impact on the product and business you create,”

**Jim Newbery, Director,
Product Innovation, Codebase.**

“Innovation is the successful commercialisation of a novel idea,”

Simon May, Impeller Ventures.

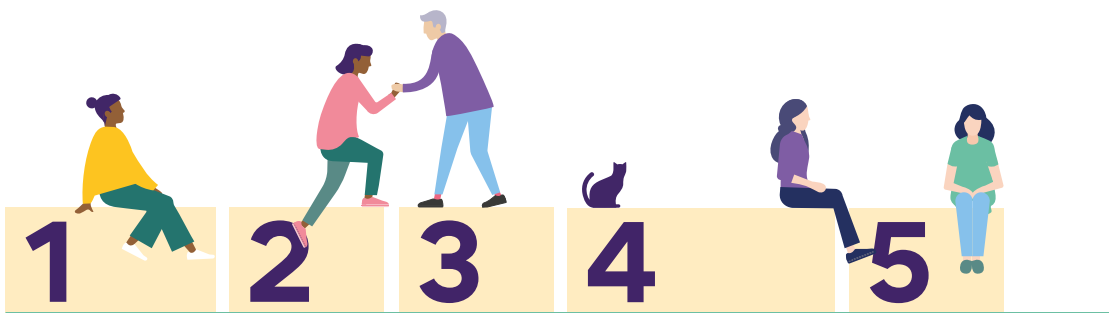
The Design Council and a 2018 McKinsey report show clearly that those companies and enterprises which invest strategically in design significantly outperform other companies in their sector. Similarly, the case studies presented in this programme and featured in the report demonstrate how design can significantly add value in helping to get new ventures off the ground and helping them to scale.

Throughout the programme, experts shared their views and insights. In the third workshop – Pitching your Design Vision – investors, heavily experienced in seeing entrepreneurs pitch their proposition in the healthy ageing market provided this expert input.



Design Council demonstrates a ROI of £7 for every £1 invested in design

3. Lessons on the value of design



Here are five insights for innovators in the healthy ageing market to effectively pitch their design vision:

1

Investors are people too: style is at the heart of an effective pitch delivery. Be natural and engaging and ensure you put lived experience at the heart of your pitch to really help bring it to life. Tell investors something they don't already know, and leave them with something memorable they can use, such as a fact or headline.

4

Essential preparation: preparing well is an obvious, but essential, starting point. This includes doing your homework so you understand both your market and to whom you are pitching, to practicing your pitch so you can be confident, keep to time, and be ready to talk without prompts if necessary.

2

Stand in their shoes: as you plan your content, put yourself in your investor's shoes – be clear what the required investment is, what this investment is for (e.g. the product or service), and the benefits of the investment.

5

Less is more: carefully considering the content and structure of your pitch is vital. Explain the problem, the solution and scale, while keeping to the most relevant information. A pitch doesn't give you time to provide all the information but delivered well becomes a hook that leads to further questions and interest.

3

Do the Hemingway Test: Ernest Hemingway famously wrote a six-word novel - "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." Be ready to sum up your product or service in the same way. Beginning with "For Sale:" how would you refine your message in six words?

3. Lessons on the value of design

Seven questions you need to be ready to answer when you step up to pitch:

Q.1 Why is your product **different**?

Q2. What is your competitive **advantage**?

Q3. What is your future market size and **growth** rate?

Q4. Have you used design to optimise your product market **fit**?

Q5. Why are you **involved**?

Q6. What product or service is your proposition going to **replace**?

Q7. What user insight has pinpointed the **gap** in the market you're exploiting?



This [Design Council resource](#) can help you describe the value of design.



3. Lessons on the value of design

Case study: Good Boost – pivoting solutions

Good Boost is a social enterprise providing affordable and accessible therapeutic exercise programmes through cutting-edge technology. Founder Ben Wilkins previously participated in the Design Council's Transform Ageing programme, giving him knowledge of design tools and concepts that he has put into practice effectively, such as the Double Diamond approach to problem mapping and solution delivery.

Good Boost spoke to participants accessing their service during the design process, rather than solely clinicians. With 18 million people in the UK living with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions, each with different experiences and viewpoints, ensuring that the design and development of their product is truly representative is vital. Good Boost used an approach to design comprising of multiple rounds of focus groups, initially focusing on 'blue sky' thinking, and then developed these ideas – re-testing them at further focus groups to provide ongoing iteration and ensure they were as representative and robust as possible.

With COVID-19 meaning in-person exercise classes could no longer take place, Good Boost shifted delivery on to an app, so people living with MSK conditions could still participate.

However initial take-up of the app was low. Insights showed people were more motivated to participate when they had made a commitment to attend a particular class as they felt they had a social contract.

As a result, Good Boost pivoted their service design, moving to a model that enables participants to feel part of a community. They are also now working in partnership with various charities, often regarded as bastions for helping people self manage their condition, and allowing them a presence on the Good Boost app.

Ben shared his golden rules around pitching to investors with participants in the Healthy Ageing by Design programme:

1. Figure out the problem. Show you truly understand the problem, have done your homework, and ensure the voices of those with lived experience are included. The better you understand your problem, the better the solution will be.

2. Co-design the solution. Gather qualitative and quantitative data that can be evidenced in report form, ensure you have consent when undertaking research so you can revisit participants and use the double diamond approach. This ultimately will allow you to design a better product, as what you are building comes directly from potential users.

3. Figure out and test how to scale ideas. Gather evidence as to why you will have better traction in the future. The most perfectly designed solution may not be the one that is adopted. Investors won't necessarily invest in the best designed solution, but the one that is going to scale.

Conclusion: Embrace design to attract investment

Despite the increasing awareness of the strategic role design can play, most enterprises are still engaging with design at its most basic level. While aware of its potential, most ventures are unaware how to leverage strategic design thinking to accelerate growth.

Following the Healthy Ageing by Design growth programme, the perceptions of design and the importance it could have for a business increased considerably amongst participants. It is highly likely that many, if not all, of the businesses who participated will either engage with design for the first time or do so in a more meaningful way following the programme.

At the end of the programme, one participant reflected that design was a “vital element of success”, while another perceived design as “critical to what we do - without good design, we could not move forward.”

For the vast majority of participants, the key lesson they took away was the ability to use design, through empathy and understanding their customers better, to continually improve the product or service they were developing. This is not a one-off process but one of constant iteration and improvement.

Critically perceptions of the value of design jumped dramatically through the programme. In particular there was an understanding of how, by truly embracing design principles, they could appeal to investors and partners and expand the growth potential for their companies.

For those entering or committed to the healthy ageing market, utilising design more effectively is an opportunity not to be missed. With design coaching, advice and support, ventures are highly likely to use design well and accelerate their growth.



"Without good design, we could not move forward."

For more information

To find out more, receive updates about news and events and join the Healthy Ageing Challenge Community of practice, visit our [microsite](#).

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Let's make ageing better.



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