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Service design principles for organizational well-being: Improving the employee experience through design thinking

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to link Service Design to organizational well-being and propose a set of design principles that can be adopted by both designers and managers responsible for the design of organizational services that aim at improving employees' well-being. Through a qualitative study, we conducted a cross-context analysis of well-being initiatives developed in three companies operating in different industries. By applying a science-based design perspective approach, we were able to derive a set of seven design principles. We highlight the importance of including these principles in the process of designing services in organizational contexts using Design Thinking, in particular services oriented to employees' well-being, as well as considering their application in broader contexts in which services may play a crucial role.

KEYWORDS: service design, design thinking, organizational wellbeing, employee experience

Introduction

One of the most important issue for managers and scholars alike is how to enable people to express the maximum of their potential in the work environment and, at the same time, make their contribution compatible with a rich and rewarding personal life. In more specific terms, this issue is often articulated as the importance to pay attention to employees' well-being as well as their ability to manage the interface between work and other areas of life. The existence of conflict perceptions between these two areas can, in fact, lead to severe reductions in individual well-being from multiple points of view: at the individual level (increased depression, burnout, and physical stress symptoms), the family sphere (reduced satisfaction within family and life in general), the work environment (reduced performance, satisfaction at work and increased turnover). In a recent report by Deloitte (Trends, 2016)

based upon the responses of 7,000 executives from 130 countries, 92% of the HR Senior Managers and Directors have mentioned as top priority the need to re-think and re-design their organizations to improve employees' well-being. Such evidence makes it very important for companies to understand fully what people's needs are and to investigate those elements of the organizational context that more than others affect the state of well-being. Furthermore, 79% of the CEO's and HR Directors consider a priority the integration of Design Thinking in people management. Design Thinking in fact refers to a human-centered approach to innovation and problem solving that puts the people and their needs at the forefront of the design process. According to this approach, organizations should consider employees as their "humans", around which they can frame the right problems and design the right solutions. The idea is to think in terms of employee experience, enriched by the constant search for concrete needs rather than ideal, general and hypothesized ones. Despite these calls, the integration of design thinking approach into the design of well-being initiatives is still in its infancy. Our paper aims to address this gap. We know the value of initiatives devoted to increase employees' wellbeing is undeniable as demonstrated by a recent McKinsey and Company study (Rizzi, et al. 2013), which shows how the value perceived by employees in relation to corporate welfare programs can even exceed the 70% of the company's costs involved to create them. However, these initiatives, even in the case of *flexible benefits* that allow employees to choose from a set of services promoted by the organization, are often carried out in a standardized way, based on *categories* of conventional and predefined needs (e.g. workplace childcare). We claim that there is an opportunity to design services that are in relation to the specific organizational context, addressing needs that are employees centered and more suited for the particular context individuals live and work in. By adopting standard solutions, well-being remains only a hope rather than a designed outcome.

When we use the term services in organizations, we refer to *core* services (linked to the transformation of input into output) and *non-core* services (e.g. facility services or non-monetary benefits). For the purpose of this study we concentrate on *non-core* services and distinguish them as 1) facility services (e.g. everything that concerns the work environment like cleaning, air-conditioning, office layout etc.) and 2) individuals services related to non-monetary benefits that an organization offers to the employees (e.g. flexible working hours, insurance programs, discounts, training opportunities, laundry, childcare etc.). In this paper we want to provide to designers that operates in the organizational contexts a way to explicitly consider well-being as one of the outcome of their designed services, through a set of design principles that connect people's needs to the context-person relation rather than promoting standard categories of services. Through a qualitative study conducted in three organizations operating in different industries, we applied a science-based design perspective approach to understand how organizational well-being is perceived by employees today and how human-centered design could contribute to improve the workplace experience. The data collected allowed us to define seven design principles that explicitly consider (organizational) well-being since the very beginning of the design process to inform and guide the different design choices. The Design Principles can be used in any Service Design project that uses a Design Thinking approach after the problem definition, to shape the solution that can be brought in the organizational context. Therefore our innovative results open multiple opportunities for intervention in designing services and experiences.

Approach

Well-being is a popular notion in today's society and it has been studied by several streams of literature like for instance, psychology, management, and transformative service design. These streams however, developed in parallel and rarely met. Despite the several attempts of scholars to define well-being, it still remains a blurred and intangible notion, as it is affected in a complex way by multiple subjective and objective

factors. The psychological state and the cognitive sense of satisfaction with life seems to be of primary importance to influence one's well-being. A person's physical health, personal beliefs, social relationships, life conditions (e.g. wealth, safe context) and the relationship to the environment are other fundamental variables that characterize well-being. Recently, Dodge et al. (2007) provided a definition of stable well-being as something that occurs when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their wellbeing, and vice-versa (Dodge et al., 2007).

Taking this definition as a starting point for our research, we draw on the model proposed by Rath and Harter (2010a, 2010b). The authors theorize well-being as composed by five elements: Career, Social, Financial, Physical and Community. These elements can suit the purpose of the study and frame the boundaries of our inquiry. We deliberately excluded the element of Financial Well-being (and other monetary aspects) to focus on the elements more challenging and interesting from a design perspective.

Considering the latest discussion in transformative service research (TSR), which represents research that focuses on creating "uplifting changes" aimed at improving the lives of individuals (both consumers and employees), families, communities, society, and the ecosystem more broadly (Anderson et al. 2013), we aim to create a link between different literatures (psychology, management and design) that are still hardly connected and thus contribute more to the TSR, by exploring the relationship between service design and well-being.

To do that we adopted a science-based design perspective currently emerging in organizational (Romme, 2003; van Aken and Romme, 2009) and management research (Van Aken, 2005) with the aim to reduce the gap between managerial practice and academic research (Baden-Fuller, 2008; Heracleous and DeVoge, 1998). Design involves human beings using knowledge to create what should and could be, while science develops knowledge about what already is (Simon, 1996). A science-based design approach connects the emerging body of research to the pragmatic, action-oriented knowledge of managers (Romme, 2003). Research and practice are linked by means of needs and design principles that can be grounded in research to create solutions to be subsequently tried out and implemented in practice (Romme and Endenburg, 2006).

Following the science-based design perspective, we describe the different steps used to conduct the study and define the design principles. We will then briefly introduce a pilot case study in which the design principles were applied using Design Thinking with the result of a service concept to improve a digital system used in a large organization operating in the Infrastructures and Cities, Energy, Healthcare, and IT industry.

Given that Service Design represents a human-centered, creative, iterative approach to the creation of new services (Blomkvist, Holmlid, and Segelström, 2010) and that services affect our lives and our well-being as individuals, employees, families, and communities (Anderson & Ostrom, 2015), we argue that designers should deliberately consider well-being as a target in their service design process. Designing a service with well-being in mind means bringing to a full extent its function - also main tenet - of being human-centered. Thus, we suggest that when conducting design research, well-being should be considered as much as needs and problems are. With this perspective, a gap emerges between the intention of designing needs-based solutions that eventually affect well-being and the explicit consideration of it throughout the entire process.

By combining qualitative and design research techniques we conducted an explorative study into five main stages following a science-based design perspective (fig.1).

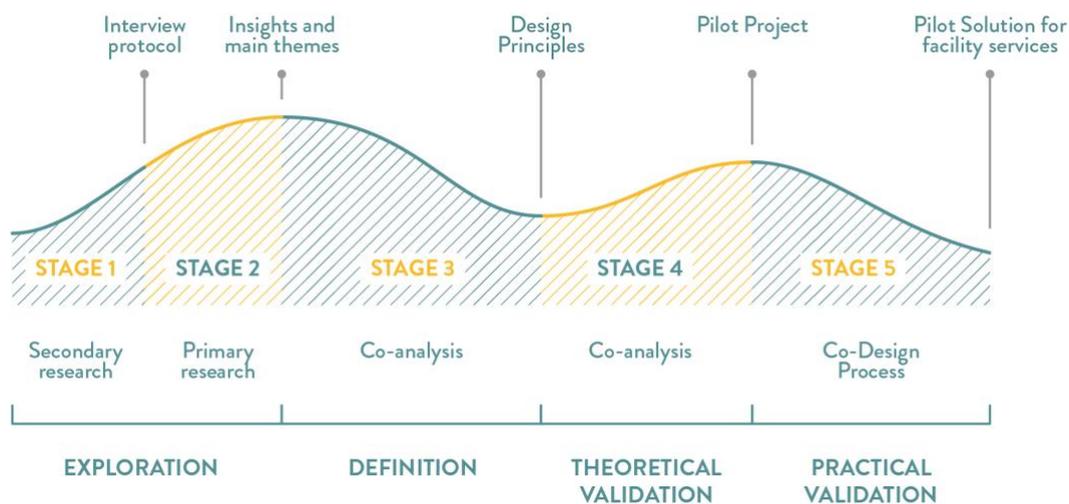


Figure 1 – Science-based design perspective process used for this study

The first stage of secondary research was followed by a second stage of need-finding in which we used qualitative research methods to investigate which working factors (e.g. safety, technology, physical environment, etc.) as well as non-working factors (e.g. community issues, family and social tensions, etc.) influence well-being and how. We conducted three case studies and performed 60 individual semi-structured interviews involving people at different stages of their career such as Junior employees, Senior employees and Managers. The case studies involved organizations in the manufacturing, consulting and insurance industry. The data collected were organized into three main categories: spaces, interactions and relationships, services and work-life balance.

In the third stage of co-analysis and initial synthesis we mapped the recurring factors considered to be meaningful by our informants and identified the main patterns, interdependences, themes and insights related to well-being. The approach used for the creation of the insights was abductive sense making and reframing (Kolko, 2010). This stage was not sequential, rather, it was iterative throughout the second stage. This process led to the development of a set of seven design principle. A first preliminary validation of these principles was conducted with a scientific committee composed by HR managers and University professors on the topic of organizational management and well-being. This fourth stage let us explore which potential organization could be contacted to practically validate the design principles and with what kind of pilot project.

A fifth stage was orchestrated to test the design principles on the field with a pilot project conducted with an organization operating in the Infrastructures and Cities, Energy, Healthcare, and IT industry. This pilot project focused on the first of the two categories of services in organizational contexts related to well-being identified for this study: facility services. The project involved a Design Thinking process and some selected methods. As follows, we will describe in detail the different stages.

Stage one – Secondary Research

The literature on well-being has proposed various models to articulate what is meant by well-being and what are the dimensions that describe it (Wright & Huang, 2012; Ashkanasy, Ayoko & Jehn, 2014; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2014; Elsbach & Pratt 2007; Dodge et al. 2012; Van De Voorde et al., 2012; Grant et al., 2007; Gruber et al. 2015; Sturges, 2012; Rath and Harther, 2010a). Rath and Harter (2010a, 2010b) describe well-being as a combination of our passion for what we do every day, the quality of our relationships, the security of our economic situation, our physical health and our pride in contributing to the communities we belong to. The fundamental concept of discussion is the complex interdependences between the different aspects of our lives and how all of them should be taken into account when we

evaluate our own status of well-being. Tosi and Pilati (2011) describe well-being and organizational health as those conditions within an organization that promote, maintain and improve the physical, psychological and social well-being of people. Accordingly, organizations try to enhance employee well-being in various ways, ranging from professional development to healthcare benefits and free employee assistance programs. For the purpose of our research, we clustered the categories that scholars and professionals were referring in their studies in three macro-categories (fig.2) of reference:

- **Spaces:** how and to what extent the physical space of the workplace affects the well-being of individuals and groups, what initiatives are being taken to safeguard the physical health of people in different places and non-places (Augé, 1992) and what kind of experience people have in different contexts.
- **Interactions and Relationships:** how important these aspects are and how they affect the perception of well-being, what role does technology play (both in its collaborative dimension and in the support and coordination of services) and how different socialization moments can be promoted or managed by the organization.
- **Services and Work-life Balance:** how are current services responsive to the needs of people and what opportunities are there for improving working life as well as the balance between private life and work.

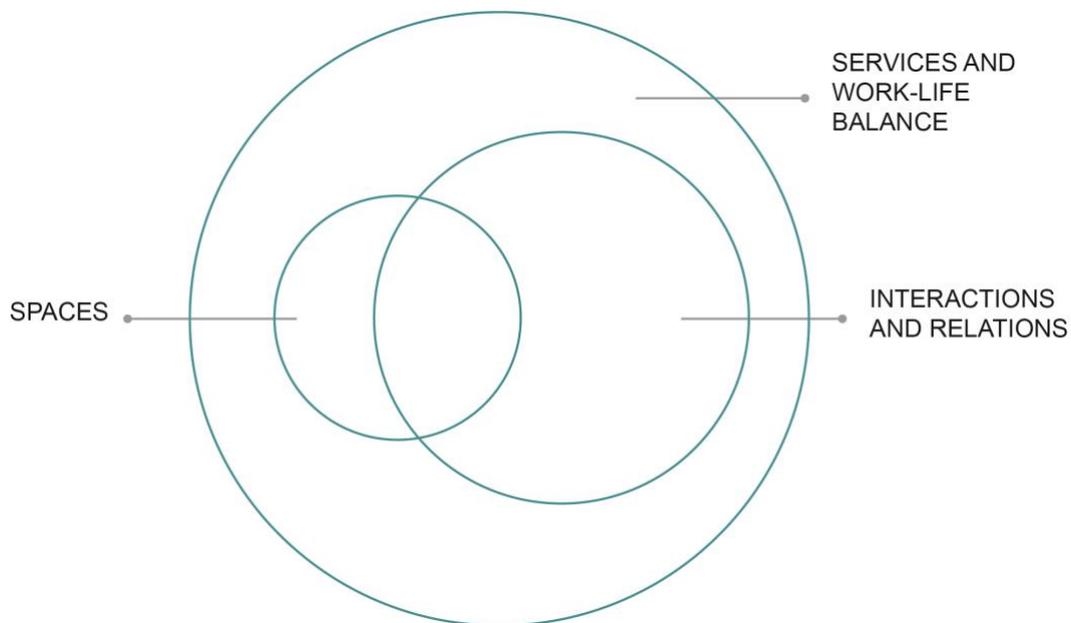


Figure 2 – Macro-categories investigated in this study

The categories should not be considered as mutually exclusive, in fact they can have areas of interdependencies that influence one another in variable measure depending on a certain context.

Stage two – Primary Research

We conducted from November 2015 to March of 2017 three case studies in three organizations operating, respectively, in the insurance, consulting and mechatronic industry. Case studies too similar would have limited the ability to identify recurring needs, behaviors, and patterns that do not depend on the type of work or industry or organization. The Insurance company is a leading global company with franchised offices in 60 countries. We conducted our study in one Italian franchise. The consulting company is a knowledge intensive firm specialized in the design of data warehouse management, big data analytics,

business intelligence, and performance management. When we collected our data, it was undergoing a period of intensive expansion and it was awarded certifications for the quality of work conditions. Finally, the mechatronic company is a leader in the design and creation of advanced mechatronic systems for power transmission in agricultural and industrial machines. It has six production plants across two continents and we conducted our study in the main production plant.

We selected our informants in the three companies with the help of the organizations' HR managers, to have a wide collection of information on all internal points of view that reflect different behavioral patterns. In general, professional role have been divided into three distinct profiles such as junior employees (0-5 years of experience in the industry), senior employees (5-30+ years of experience in the industry) and Managers.

We conducted 60 individual semi-structured interviews (20 for each case study) at each organizations' site. Interviews lasted between one and two hours, according to the informants' level of involvement. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews involved 35 men and 25 women, with experiences within organizations ranging from a few months up to 37 years old. More specifically, beyond having multiple conversations with the top management of each company, we interviewed 20 employees in the insurance company, 10 employees working in staff positions and 10 production workers in the main plant in the mechatronic company and 20 consultants in various career stages at the consulting company. Consistent with the principles of qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), protocols have evolved to accommodate and analyze topics that have emerged as relevant during the field research. The concept of human-centered design is fully applied at this stage in which the focus moves completely on people by observing them, actively listening to them, and empathizing with them to be able to interpret their thoughts, quotes, and emotions. The importance of this phase is to make unexpressed needs emerge, stimulating an open and collaborative conversation in order to catch interesting insights, or research hints that often arise thanks to the interpretation between what the person said and what the interviewer observed.

We grouped different insights across the case studies into recurring themes and reorganized them on the basis of the three macro-categories identified in the first stage. During the interviews, some other topics that could not be traced back to the three categories emerged spontaneously. These have been investigated and grouped separately. On the following pages, we summarize [table 1,2,3] the different categories, themes and insights which highlight all the elements that:

- have been mentioned by the informants as more relevant to their well-being;
- help maintain a good organizational climate;
- represent emerging needs as well as some critical aspects that suggest opportunities of improvement.

Similarly to the previous macro-categories, the different themes should not be seen as if they were independent. There are, in fact, interdependencies between the various components that together affect well-being. The themes do not rule out the importance of other aspects and other unquoted good practices that are already in use in organizational contexts. They simply reflect those implicit, explicit and latent needs that are most relevant to people, within the organizations explored in this research.

Each theme incorporates those key concepts that inspired one or more design principles.

themes	OPEN SPACE AMBIVALENTS ASPECTS	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
sub themes	-	CLIMATIZATION AND HEALTHY AIR	CLEANLINESS OF THE ENVIRONMENTS
insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People prefer to work side by side rather than by distance • Breaks and distractions become critical when there are no rules that define the behavior of individuals in the different spaces • People need spaces for more formal or private conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People perceive the same temperature differently • Air conditioning does not solve the problem of unhealthy air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning services must be invisible and at the same time visible
main quote	<i>"In the open space you do not feel isolated, does a lot of team, lets you circulate ideas, knowledge, is very enjoyable when work does not require extreme concentration"</i> Interview, 18/12/2015	-	<i>"There is a problem because on our floor the cleaning staff arrives at 5pm, we are in the rush hour at 5pm so she can not clean the desk because we are working"</i> Interview, 18/12/2015
design principle inspired	Design Principle n. 2, 4	Design Principle n. 2	Design Principle n. 2, 3, 4

Table 1 – Macro-category a) Spaces

themes	AWARENESS, COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK	KNOWLEDGE SHARING	POSITIVE CLIMATE AND SOCIALIZING	CREATIVE SOLUTIONS
insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People want to be more involved in the choices that affect the different aspects of their work • There is the need to increase, with clear information, the awareness of the available benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is needed a management of the trade-off among the activities that generate value in the long term and results in the short term (e.g. financial, more immediate) • Physical interaction among people should be encouraged compared to the digital one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to socialize with different group of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People need spaces and moments in which to express their creative potential
main quote	<i>"We knew this was done for us, but without asking us what we needed"</i> Interview, 14/12/2015	<i>The problem is that tension that sometimes is created because we are paid for hours [...] so the company on one hand encourages these moments, on the other creates a little pressure to limit them [...] an indirect pressure, in some ways a little cultural"</i> Interview, 4/12/2015	<i>"You risk losing an identity if you lose the habit of having even unstructured sharing moments"</i> Interview, 18/12/2015	<i>"To me it is very important to have mental time to diverge, so to find ideas, to find the most innovative part [...] is fundamental to the state of work wellness"</i> Interview, 4/12/2015
design principle inspired	Design Principle n. 1, 2, 4	Design Principle n. 1, 2, 4	Design Principle n. 1, 2, 3, 4	Design Principle n. 1, 4

Table 2 – Macro-category b) Interactions and relations

themes	FAMILY	WELLNESS	TIME
insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People need to feel trust to who will help them in managing extra-job activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People need "easy access" to those services that help maintain an ideal physical well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible hours can have a negative impact if they are not "controlled" • People need to act on different personal and social identities
main quote	<p>"I think if the service was activated by the organization the people in charge would be reliable people [...] at least it must be a person I know" Interview, 11/02/2016</p>	<p>"There would be something that will allow you to make a healthier snack" Interview, 18/12/2015</p>	<p>"If you go out at 6pm, you feel that this thing is not well seen into the team, because now it seems to have become more normal to stay more" Interview, 6/12/2015</p> <p>"It's not that I want to have a business service that takes away your dirty shirts, that's not what I want. I do not want to end up on the weekend doing everything" Interview, 4/12/2015</p>
design principle inspired	Design Principle n. 1, 2, 3, 6	Design Principle n. 1, 2, 4, 7	Design Principle n. 1, 2, 4, 5

Table 3 – Macro-category c) Services and work-life balance

Stage three – Definition

Starting from the map of needs, the most significant insights and the most recurring themes, we organized a first co-analysis workshop of the data collected to validate and define the design principles. We shared the information gathered from the research and the method used with the participants and asked them to review the transcribed interviews that we conducted. This first step was useful to set a basic level of shared empathy with the informants and possibly identify new insight from different multiple perspectives. Management and organizational behavior experts, project managers and service designers were involved in this activity. The discussion allowed us to deepen the concepts emerged from the field, analyze them from different points of view and select the most interesting one by using the dot voting technique. We identified 9 themes and 16 insights based on what the informants depicted to be as more meaningful to their well-being (Table 1,2,3). During this workshop, we isolated key ideas and revealed the connection between key elements that let us develop 7 design principles that define the important aspects to consider when designing services for well-being that will be discussed in the results section below.

Stage four – Theoretical Validation

Following this first workshop, we organized a panel of discussion with a Scientific Committee, specifically set up at the beginning of the research project, to implement a first validation of the design principles at a theoretical level. The involvement of practitioners operating in the field of space design, behavioral architects, services designers and corporate organization, has contributed to highlight the importance of some key concepts and better define the design principle that could be used as complementary to those already existing in the service design discipline. Enriched by the important feedbacks gathered in this stage, we evaluated different organizations and possible pilot projects that could be carried on to apply the design principles and evaluate their impact in the design process.

Stage five – Practical Validation

We conducted a first pilot project to validate the use of the design principles and the effects they can have on a design process. The pilot project was about involving an organization, in this case operating in the Infrastructures and Cities, Energy, Healthcare, and IT industry, using a design thinking approach (fig.3) to explore and address possible issues negatively impacting well-being in the workplace. We used qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews and observations on two different branches of the organization in two different cities to identify employees' needs. We interviewed 11 people, among employees and managers and conducted 16 hours of observation in the two different workplaces. The most relevant needs identified were clustered based on their connection to the seven design principles of well-being.

Using the design principles since the beginning of the design process helped the team to quickly frame the scope of the research, define the area of intervention and create a coherent service concept that addresses specific issues related to employees' well-being. The study took into account the needs and issues that were more relevant for this context and identified facility services as the main area of interest to investigate. In fact, the aspect of individuals services related to non-monetary benefits was already well served. The figure 3 shows more in detail the tools used throughout the design process.

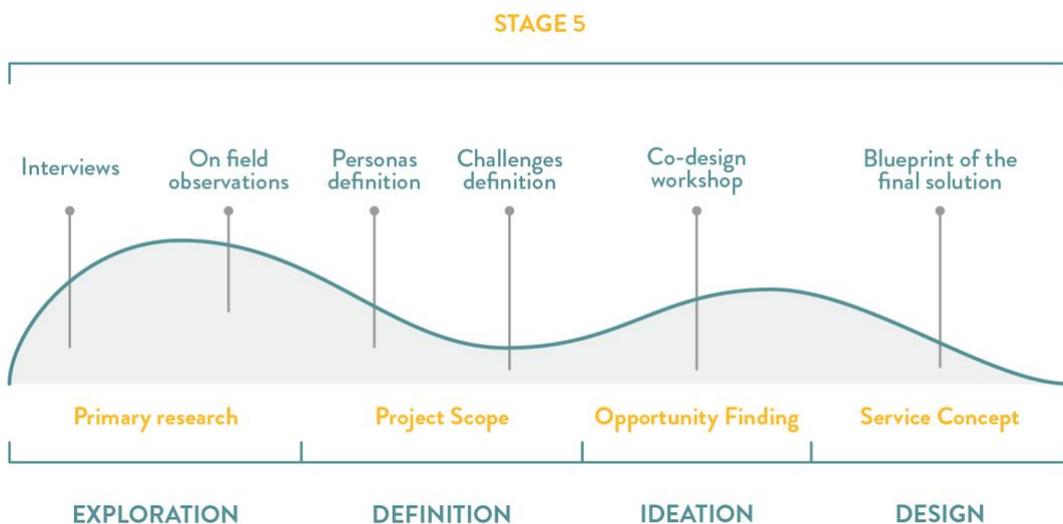


Figure 3 – Design Thinking process used in the fifth stage of the study

Results

Based on the insights and data analysis we developed a set of 7 design principles that can extend the opportunities to enhance people well-being in organizations. We found that a number of factors characterize the employee well-being experience, thus we grouped the most relevant emerged from the interviews into 8 representative needs (consideration, trust, conflicts reduction, satisfaction, sense of belonging, stress relief, gratitude, personal and social identity) that can be satisfied when applying the design principles to the service design process. To make the principles as more actionable as possible, we indicate how each of them can positively affect one or more needs. These principles should be seen as complementary to those that guide already the service design process (Stickdorn, Schneider, Lawrence, 2011).

The Design Principles

Below we discuss the seven design principles that suggest the key features that organizational services must have to produce positive effects on well-being. This should represent a guide for those who design or are responsible for the choices that concern facility and other organizational services (e.g. HR Managers, Real Estate Managers, CEOs, etc...). The design principles represent a first answer to the question:

How might we design services and experiences that create well-being for people within organizations?

In the discipline of design, principles are concepts or statements used to organize and guide any choices that affect the content or message of a certain project. The design principles describe the most important elements to be considered to generate different solutions and help maintain a good consistency between the different iterative phases. The way these principles are applied determines the success of a design solution.

We argue that the fact that a service can generate well-being must not be accidental, but rather must be the result of conscious and intentional choices.

Design Principle n.1: Understand needs, engage in the choices

Giving people the opportunity to be involved in the ideation of services, initiatives and tools, means taking more conscious choices that consider real needs and positively impact well-being. The level of co-design should vary depending on the problem an organization is dealing with and may require different levels of involvement for the employees. The important aspect is to communicate the various implementation phases of a certain project, whether related to facility or people, and to return feedbacks that would justify the organization's final choices.

Satisfied needs and positive impact: increase in the sense of consideration by the organization; strengthening the trust in management; conflicts reduction; increase in satisfaction; increase in the sense of belonging.

Design Principle n.2: Communicate and create awareness

Communicating clearly the information, the values and the results that pertain to various service initiatives, is crucial. In fact if a service meant for employees is poorly communicated may have adverse effects rather than positive ones (e.g. it may result in a underutilization of the service or even discourage the employee participation in co-design activities). Awareness, designed as a component of a service, can also explicitly address the promotion of good behavioral habits directly related to the physical well-being of people (e.g. healthy nutrition, posture, prevention campaigns, etc...).

Satisfied needs and positive impact: increase in the sense of consideration by the organization; strengthening the trust in management; increase in satisfaction; increase in the sense of belonging; stress relief.

Design Principle n.3: Anticipate expectations

It is important to know what are the expectations of people not to disappoint them and to plan accordingly to overcome such expectations.

Satisfied needs and positive impact: increase in satisfaction; increase in the sense of gratitude.

Design Principle n.4: Encouraging human interaction

It is important to develop relationships in and out of the work environment. The services designed within an organization should facilitate the interactions among people and consider this a priority even when digital touchpoints are part of the employee experience.

Satisfied needs and positive impact: conflicts reduction; increase in the sense of belonging.

Design Principle n.5: Adapting over time

Designing for the entire service life cycle, that is taking into account the changing factors that may occur over time: (a) the experience of use that the service produces, (b) the individual priorities, and (c) the individual and group expectations. Closely related to this aspect is the design of systems to monitor the intensity of use of the services over time.

Satisfied needs and positive impact: increase in the sense of consideration by the organization; strengthening the trust in management; conflicts reduction; increase in satisfaction; increase in the sense of belonging.

Design Principle n.6: Consider the variable preferences of people

When designing services, it is necessary to consider the need for people to delegate some services in certain circumstances and, on the contrary, to maintain some ownership and an active role in managing them, in others. Preferences may vary depending on the service and context. The proposal of a service should give the employee the opportunity to choose whether to use the service and when.

Satisfied needs and positive impact: increase in the sense of consideration by the organization; increase in satisfaction; strengthens personal and social identity.

Design Principle n.7: Differentiate the accessibility to services

Services should be easily accessible in terms of costs, time of access and personal needs. It is important to understand how the same service can meet the same need through different modality of delivery (e.g. a convention with a particular gym rather than using the corporate gym).

Satisfied needs and positive impact: increase in the sense of consideration by the organization; strengthening the trust in management; conflicts reduction; increase in satisfaction; increase in the sense of belonging; stress relief.

We have defined design principles that can help not only to design better services, but also configure better moments of interaction and spaces. The design principles suggest that there are different elements in these three areas (spaces, interactions, services) that are interconnected and characterize the experience of people within an organization.

Concluding remarks

In this research, we have explored the most influential factors affecting well-being in organizations by analyzing three different case studies.

The most important contribution is that we highlight opportunities for the Service Design discipline to improve the impact of human-centered solutions and the importance of

creating a new paradigm that takes well-being as central objective in the disciplines of design that aim to enhance experiences in the workplace. The argument is that an ‘excellent’ experience is one that aims to improve people well-being besides satisfying basic needs and solving functional problems.

The results of our study are particularly relevant in today’s organizational contexts characterized by increased complexities. The focus to improving people well-being has changed and is constantly evolving. Expectations of well-being and job satisfaction are inevitably changing in time, too. The working population is currently composed of five generations that bring with them different values and different preferences. This has also influenced the offer of incentives and benefits that have become increasingly flexible until reaching a *tailor-made* dimension (Clavarino, 2015). It is therefore critical that, within the company’s welfare policies, a particular consideration should be given to well-being in the short and in the long term. Designing for well-being means to remember that

what is motivating at a given moment becomes then a hygienic factor. One factor, therefore, that if not present creates dissatisfaction, but that if it is present it is no longer able to generate the same initial motivation. In some ways, well-being must be considered in relation to its life cycle. (Anonymous, 2016, interview)

Finding a balance between life and work, it means having an awareness of how to manage both spheres independently and responsibly. The organization plays a key role in creating and supporting a culture of mutual trust that can grow over time.

Cultural values should be rooted on a fundamental concept: life at work and private life must have the same dignity. (Anonymous, 2016, interview)

The design principles for well-being that we propose are one of the tools that can be adopted by an organization that follows a Design Thinking approach to reach these goals. It is also equally important, as mentioned before, to initiate continuous iteration processes to monitor the services developed and to understand the effects on well-being over time. Lean and flexible approaches such as Design Thinking can therefore be a valuable support for decisions not only regarding product, service, and process innovation, but also for incentives and reward systems (both monetary and non-monetary benefits). They can represent a key strategic lever for businesses that intend to increase the organizational well-being with mutual benefit over the short as well as the long term.

Despite the contributions that our design principles offer to literature, our research is not without limitations. During the pilot project we conducted, we could not really measure the impact that the design principles could have on the employee experience of the organization as the final solution remained at a conceptual level. Even if when conducting the primary research we gathered a large amount of consensus from both managers and employees that the proposed solution would improve the physical, psychological and relational well-being within the organization, we are conscious that further investigations and iterations on the application of the design principles for well-being is needed.

We suggest that there are a number of interesting research questions inspired by our study. Some examples include: How can we measure the impact of Service Design in organizational well-being? What would it take to design for short term versus long term well-being? What other implications Design Thinking and Service Design have on well-being beyond organizational context? What other factors should we considerate?

We invite future research to involve HR, psychology, management and design scholars to approach the topic of designing organizational well-being in a more holistic fashion, to achieve a better understanding of how organizations, managers and designers can address new challenges while improving the quality of life in organizational contexts.

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