FOOD FOR THOUGHT
A service based approach to embedding innovation
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There is now a general consensus in business that organisations of all types must innovate in order to stay in the game. Few doubt the need to generate and implement new ideas in a fiercely competitive knowledge economy.

But that consensus quickly breaks down when it comes to how to innovate. How you go about building an innovation culture in your company is a tough nut to crack. Do you invest in an internal innovation resource or rely on the external impact of away days, workshops and consultant input? That is the crux of the problem.

This publication describes a collaborative project undertaken by two design researchers at the Royal College of Art that explores the issue of embedding innovation in organisations. ‘Food For Thought’ takes a design-based approach; this is not simply in the context of design as an essential element in the innovation process itself, but in recognition of the way in which design can create and describe scenarios for change.

Previous projects on the RCA’s Research Associates programme have looked at triggers for innovation, but always through the lens of physical artefacts such as innovation spaces, furniture or communication devices. This study by Toke Barter and Ré Dubhthaigh of RCA Interaction Design focuses on service design, using the metaphor of a restaurant service to describe how an in-company innovation resource might operate.

The narrative that unfolds – with a head chef, cooks and waiters coordinating three levels of service, ‘snacking’, ‘fast food’ and ‘gourmet’ innovation – crystallises the issues in a vivid way. What began as a study of how to make the experience of one special innovation space transferable to other locations has broadened into an examination of what organisations need to be innovative on a day-to-day basis. To extend the metaphor, there is plenty of meat on the bones.

I am grateful to research partners BOX, an innovation exchange at the London School of Economics, and architects DEGW for originating the study and for supporting its unanticipated trajectory and provocative outcomes. At a time when companies worldwide are investing heavily in new project spaces and consultant-led change programmes in order to learn to innovate more effectively, I believe that the new service design that emerges here can act as a catalyst for a much-needed debate on what is really required to be successful at the tricky business of generating new ideas.

JEREMY MYERSON, DIRECTOR INNOVATIONRCA PROFESSOR OF DESIGN STUDIES ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART
Why we wrote this book
This book is the outcome of a year’s collaborative research into the role of innovation in corporate organisations.

Innovation has long been seen as a specialised art – a skill that lies with a certain resource within an organisation or with an external consultant. In this research, we set out to ‘demystify’ innovation practice and create, through a service-based approach, a framework for embedding innovation tools and processes into everyday working life.

Innovation is already being tackled by large organisations, but from a business management viewpoint. This project is situated within the emergent field of design-led innovation, offering an alternative structure for implementing innovation practice in large organisations.

Towards an innovation economy
Over the last few decades, the world has moved towards a ‘knowledge economy’. Competitor countries, such as China and India, are not only growing their manufacturing base, but are also investing heavily in R&D and professional skills. To compete in this global arena, knowledge work and innovation practice play a vital role in UK business.

The Cox Review of Creativity in Business was commissioned by the UK Government in 2005 to look at how best to enhance UK business productivity by drawing on creative capabilities. The Review states, ‘sustained success in business – regardless of sector – increasingly depends on the ability to innovate, to exploit new ideas and opportunities ahead of the competition’.

Indeed, there is clear evidence that those businesses that make design integral to their business, out-perform companies that do not. The UK Design Council’s research, tracking shares of design-aware companies including Diageo and GlaxoSmithKline, showed they out-performed the FTSE 100 index by 200% over a ten-year period. Progressive businesses see the value in design thinking. In fact, design is now being used for such diverse purposes as evaluating social and political issues, regenerating business in deprived areas and revitalising whole economies.

However, despite the growing role of design-led innovation in business, according to the Cox Review, it still faces a number of barriers, including:

- limited understanding of where and how greater creativity could be used to business advantage
- lack of confidence in the idea that the investment, in terms of time, money and disruption, will give a return
- lack of knowledge of how to go about it, or where to turn for help.

Productive work in today’s society and economy is work that applies vision, knowledge and concepts – work that is based on the mind rather than the hand.

Peter Drucker, Landmarks of Tomorrow, 1965
Current business models

There are many ways of integrating innovation practice into businesses, but from our research we have identified three main approaches.

Deparmentalised  Innovation practice is most often concentrated within specific departments of an organisation. While there are valid reasons for keeping it isolated – it is protected from conflict and its potential has the room to be nurtured – it also has negative effects. The ability to draw on the knowledge of the entire organisation is lost, and this separation can also lead to the perception that innovation is outside the norm, and not part of daily working life.

Spin-off  Some organisations spin-off or incubate separate companies, providing them with the capital and expertise to develop an innovation. However, organisations that do this are in danger of removing key knowledge and skills that then have no direct path back into the organisation.

External Consultants  External consultancies are often used to manage innovation practice within large corporations. While they provide specialised knowledge and skills, this expertise resides outside the company. New skills are prevented from being developed in-house and a culture of dependency on external knowledge develops.

New educational models

In order for design-led innovation to overcome these barriers in business, the first point of change lies in education. Over the last 10 years, a growing number of MBA programmes have recognised this new role of design in business and management. For example, the SAID Business School in Oxford is exploring ways of incorporating design-led innovation into more traditional business degrees. The Stanford Institute of Design (D-School) is more explicitly design orientated, using prototyping and iterative processes and user research. It draws students from various disciplines such as engineering, medicine, business and the humanities to create an innovation programme.

These courses aim to produce business leaders who understand how innovation works and can bring design thinking into organisations. As these design-led programmes flourish, so too will the nature of innovation in business.

The first wave of ‘design management’ teaching in business schools in the 1980s-90s is now giving way to what might be seen as a second wave, with a focus on ‘design leadership’ and ‘design thinking’.

LUCY KIMBELL, C&J CLARK FELLOW IN DESIGN LEADERSHIP AT THE SAID BUSINESS SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
During the initial phases of this project, research was carried out into innovation processes, environments and frameworks, and methods for embedding these innovation models into the everyday life of organisations.

**User research**

Innovation workshops, undertaken in collaboration with innovation consultants Ludic, BOX, Group Partners, architects DEGW, and computer management consultants EDS were crucial in informing and refining the approach to the project. They provided insight into how events are run, how environments are used, the role of facilitators, methods deployed and how participants interact with each other.

A three-week workshop with design students at the Designskolen Kolding in Denmark also proved valuable in testing ideas and ways of working with a creative audience. It helped to define the relationship between process and output, the need for a facilitator and the role of conceptual frameworks.

In addition, our commercial experience running our own company Radarstation has given us a first-hand view of the challenges faced by large organisations in driving innovation, which in turn has informed this research.

**Defining innovation**

Within design and business, there is much debate about the relationship between innovation and design and what role, if any, a designer should have in shaping organisational processes and structures.

In fact, among many the word ‘innovation’ itself is seen as a hackneyed term. However, we believe that innovation is still an appropriate term when defined as:

*a process that brings ideas together in new ways in order to form new solutions.*
Our research has shown that innovation practice consists of a complex web of drivers and barriers. Any rigid approach to innovation will break down when imposed on the everyday reality of a people-driven organisation, where job insecurity, project envy and corporate inertia are often present.

We have gained a number of key insights from our research, which have driven our subsequent designs.

**Innovation is encouraged but not supported**

There is a great deal of talk in business circles about the need to ‘innovate’. Many large organisations pay lip service to the need for innovation but fail to provide the necessary support or training to enable employees to generate, test, iterate and communicate ideas on an ongoing basis.

A lack of dedicated time for innovation was often cited as a key barrier during our research. Corporate cycles can also act as a barrier by measuring people’s performance against short-term metrics that mitigate against risk-taking and innovation.

**Crash dieting**

Most innovation models invite short, external injections of fresh ideas. These occur through away days, workshops and conferences, which are often dependent on outside consultants. However, much of the knowledge gained at these facilitated events is lost when everyday work routines begin again. It can be difficult for those who attend external events to inspire their entire organisation to embrace the outcomes of these workshops.

**A scattergun approach**

Innovation processes and tools often lack a guiding framework within organisations. The drive to innovate has led to a multiplicity of tools and methodologies being used. At present, these are used piecemeal and with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Too often, these abstract tools are divorced from their context of use. It is the interaction between people that is the key to innovation – regardless of the tools or methodologies used.

To create truly innovative organisations the approach to creative thought and innovation needs to be cohesive, with an underlying framework that guides and supports the whole innovation process.
**Outside-in innovation**
A major issue with using external innovation consultants is the perceived loss of project ownership by internal teams. While consultants do provide valuable expertise, this lack of buy-in by staff can stifle innovation.

Dependency on outside contractors also means that valuable skills are not learned in house, and the tacit knowledge of employees is not used to full effect.

**Innovation – an act of divine inspiration?**
Innovation is sometimes presented as a moment of magical or divine inspiration. In our view, this has led to a misunderstanding about the process of innovation, and the belief that it is only available to the ‘gifted few’. Such a perception can damage the long-term reach of innovation within a company – marginalising it and removing it from everyday practice.

At the heart of all innovation processes are some simple transferable skills that can be learned. A design-led approach combines innovation and creativity with structure and discipline, so that innovation is allowed to become part of everybody’s working life within business.

**New spaces and new processes**
The shift towards knowledge work over the past 30 years has led to the creation of new kinds of working environments, which emphasise co-operation, teamwork and creativity. Our research partner, DEGW, is a world leader in the construction of such innovative office environments.

However, while we recognise the importance of the office environment in supporting innovation, we feel that for these spaces to be used more effectively and efficiently, they require a supporting framework. Often, these spaces are under-utilised due to organisational mindsets. With the correct processes supporting them, they can act as genuine catalysts for innovation.

*Creativity cannot be viewed as a skill possessed by the gifted few. It needs to pervade the thinking of the whole business.*

THE COX REVIEW, 2005
Authors as designers
We have carried out this project as research associates at the Royal College of Art. However, we have also been able to draw on our professional experience as designers in an everyday practice, working with a broad range of commercial, public and academic clients.

Our main interests lie in exploring how design can be used beyond its traditional boundaries. We believe design-led tools and processes can help solve complex issues, whether redesigning public services, for example the Red team’s work at the Design Council, re-energising economically depressed areas like DOTTO7 in the North East of England or shaping business strategy, like service designers Live|work.

Design-led innovation
From our research, numerous interviews and own daily practice, we believe that there are three main areas where design can play an important role in the everyday innovation process:

- generating ideas
- testing and iterating ideas
- communicating ideas

Like our definition of innovation, a design-led approach shapes both the process of innovation as well as the final outputs. And like design, the innovation process is not always linear, so these processes can happen at various stages of a production cycle.

Above all, design is a social process and can act as the glue that binds different people, with different skills and outlooks, together.
**Generating ideas**

Despite the common misconception that designs are arrived at in a flash of artistic genius, creative ideas can in fact be generated using simple tools and processes. A number of these can be applied to any field, or re-designed to tackle specific problems an organisation may encounter.

Design tools and processes can help to:
- generate new ideas (e.g. brainstorming sessions)
- facilitate conversations between people (e.g. guide and drive an event)
- create a common language and understanding (e.g. visualisation of abstract thinking)
- shift mindsets (e.g. help people see an issue differently)
- create platforms for sharing and cross-pollinating ideas (e.g. social software tools that work across departments)
- inspire and inform debate (e.g. an internal exhibition)

All of these provide a breeding ground for new ideas.

**Testing and iterating ideas**

Design is invaluable in making ideas visible. New design ideas are often sketched up quickly to allow for comment in the early stages. This enables people to understand the potential of an idea in a tangible format, and also highlight potential flaws, allowing for evaluation and creating debate.

Building simple prototypes allows for early testing of concepts. Prototypes are not limited to only exploring the physical properties of a product, but also the interactions and experiences.

Complex systems or abstract ideas are better tested through scenarios, stories or artifacts (evidence) that capture an audience’s imagination and highlight the impact that their implementation could have.

**Communicating ideas**

Design is a powerful tool for effectively communicating an idea clearly, simply and dynamically. It makes new concepts real, giving them life and helping to achieve the support of stakeholders both within the organisation and externally. This buy-in is crucial for innovation practice to thrive and succeed.

Effective communication is also important when implementing an innovation – giving people a constant to refer to, ensuring that the idea comes to fruition as originally intended.

Good design allows everyone to communicate together clearly and coherently. It creates a common language among those involved in a project, ensuring success from outset to completion.
We believe that the best way to embed innovation practice within an organisation is via an in-house innovation support service.

This approach offers an alternative to current business and design-based models of innovation, being design-led, people-focused and enabling, rather than controlling, of innovation practice within organisations. It provides a sustainable framework for embedding design-led innovation practice, allowing it to grow organically.

Above all, it supports people in their everyday working lives, facilitating interactions between them, empowering them with new processes, helping them to share knowledge, and implementing new skills.

How does it work?
The innovation support service works in a similar way to technical support services within large organisations. It is non-disruptive, offering support when and where needed. Ownership rests with the whole organisation rather than with a specific department, and the skills and knowledge of the innovation support service can be utilised by everyone.

Why in-house?
Making the service in-house means that it is always available and becomes an integral part of the business. As the service grows organically, innovation tools and processes are spread through osmosis from the support service into the organisation, and a common language is constructed for communication across disciplines and departments. The service also acts as an innovation hub by redistributing knowledge, ideas and human resources.

Where does it sit?
The innovation support service is cross-organisational, so works at every level and within every department. It links strategy to operations and allows for the cross-pollination of ideas and insights. It also helps to integrate external knowledge resources, when and where required.

No organisation ever created an innovation. People innovate, not companies.  
SETH GODIN, FREE PRIZE INSIDE, 2004
The framework of the innovation service is analogous to food, or, more specifically, the service structure of a restaurant.

As you would find in a restaurant, the design-led innovation service is multi-disciplinary, skilled and iterative. It encourages similar rituals and social interactions to those that exist between the diner and the kitchen staff, and its output can range from a 'quick snack' to a 'ten-course banquet'.

Innovation, like cooking, is a transferable skill that can be improved with practice. For example, all the facilities needed to create a new and inspiring meal may be present in a kitchen, but skills and guidance must also be present to create that new dish.

The in-house innovation support service makes skills available to all so that they can be used to benefit an entire organisation.
**Three service offerings**
The innovation support team provides three distinct levels of service, ranging from micro-interventions with little direct contact to quick, simple outputs and more thorough long-term, process-driven solutions. We refer to these three levels of service as ‘Snacking’, ‘Fast Food’ and ‘Gourmet’.

**Snacking**
Innovation Snacking consists of small interventions into an employee’s everyday experience. Snacking highlights and distributes knowledge and tools through easily-accessible channels in the work environment, enabling everyday innovation practice.

**Fast Food**
Fast Food Innovation practice is a product-driven innovation support, which gives project teams quick, results-driven solutions. Each Fast Food product is based on a simple template, but then tailored to meet the specific requirements of the project.

**Gourmet**
Gourmet Innovation is bespoke process-driven support. As it focuses on innovation practice, the final outcome is not pre-set. A member of the innovation support service is embedded into project teams, for deep engagement over a sustained period of time. They share knowledge and guide the development of a project, co-creating innovation practice with the project team.

A more detailed exploration of the Snacking, Fast Food and Gourmet services can be found on the following pages.

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<th><strong>GOURMET</strong></th>
<th><strong>FAST FOOD</strong></th>
<th><strong>SNACKING</strong></th>
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<td>support ordered whenever needed</td>
<td>work environment</td>
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<td>process driven solutions</td>
<td>rapid product solutions</td>
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The Kitchen is at the heart of the innovation support service, is highly visible and operates across the whole organisation at multiple levels. It has its own budget and funding. It is not in competition with other departments but its multi-disciplinary team plays a supporting role to all.

The Kitchen uses design-based thinking and skillsets to push innovation throughout the organisation by serving as:

- a production studio where the innovation support team designs and builds solutions
- a reference space or knowledge resource for both the innovation support team and the rest of the organisation
- an experimental space where new processes are created, new trends spotted and new methodologies piloted
- an exhibition space to showcase the innovation of the entire organisation.

**Values at the heart of the Kitchen**

The Kitchen is:

*Open* physically, in processes and in outputs. There are no smoke and mirrors – every part of the process of innovation is made visible to the rest of the organisation, anyone can come into the space to draw on resources, and its output is widely visible.

*Supportive* the Kitchen helps to embed the processes and tools it uses throughout the organisation.

*Responsive* it responds to the needs and demands of the rest of the organisation, helping them to achieve their objectives.

*Proactive* it communicates new knowledge, tools and processes. It actively looks for knowledge both inside and outside the organisation – acting as a conduit for specialised advice and skills.
Broadly, there are three main actors in the innovation support service: the chef who sets out the vision, the cooks who do the production work and the waiters who liaise between the Kitchen and the rest of the organisation.

**The chef**
The chef is a ‘design champion’ who provides leadership at a strategic level. This person sits on the board, and therefore has access to the highest levels of a company. The chef sets out the role of the innovation support team and the kind of work it will do.

The chef also runs the Kitchen, carries out research, writes new recipes and recommends dishes to the project teams. Ultimately, the chef acts as a link between the ground floor and the very top of an organisation.

**The cooks**
The cooks form a creative production team that comprises various skills – all of which can be tailored to the needs of the organisation. Cooks might be graphic designers, film makers, photographers, writers, programmers, web developers, model builders, ethnographers, user researchers and so on.

They work together to evolve solutions – depending on the needs of a particular project or piece of work – and combine their skills to create a final dish.

**The waiters**
The key skill of the waiters is communication. They are the eyes and ears of the Kitchen and are people orientated. As well as liaising between the cooks and the Kitchen, they move across all silos, serving several groups or resources concurrently.

Waiters explain the role and uses of the Kitchen and the whole innovation support team, communicate the needs of the project teams to the cooks and the chef and offer advice and take requests. Their service is discreet and non-intrusive – waiters are there just when you need them.
The metaphorical Cookbook is the knowledge repository of the Kitchen and a resource for the innovation support team. It is also a practical reference tool that can be used by the organisation at large.

It is a living resource that is constantly being expanded, iterated and improved upon. The Cookbook outlines the tools, processes and methodologies of the innovation support team, and has templates for common outputs and solutions that can be tailored to specific problems.

It contains knowledge about staff – tracking skills and interests that can be called on when relevant, helping an organisation utilise all the skills it has in-house and allowing employees to work on projects that appeal to their interests.

The Cookbook is also a home for finished outputs outside of their project teams, where they can be visible to the wider organisation and act as inspiration to others. In this way it serves as a library for completed work – outputs from all three services offerings can be retrieved from here and, where appropriate, sent out again.

The chef is the primary author and editor of the Cookbook, but all Kitchen members, the wider organisation and, at times outside experts, can contribute to it.
What is Innovation Snacking?
Innovation Snacking consists of small interventions made into an employee’s everyday experience. It introduces the in-house innovation support service to the rest of the organisation in a non-disruptive, non-threatening way.

There is little direct contact with the Kitchen. Instead, Snacking highlights and distributes knowledge and tools through easily-accessible channels, such as a desktop computer, items left on desks or an internal exhibition, direct to employees.

There are two main types of Snacks:

Knowledge Snacks
Each Knowledge Snack is a discrete, focused package of knowledge from the Kitchen, based around a particular topic that informs or inspires the worker. Here, Innovation Snacking is a one-way distribution channel that shares knowledge across the organisation and cross-pollinates ideas.

Potential formats for Knowledge Snacks could include viral ethnography and in-house exhibitions.

Tool Snacks
These are small, personalised tools that create new mental spaces, facilitate different ways of working or help to create new sets of relationships between co-workers, fostering new links between people. Potential formats for Tool Snacks could include social software tools for sharing ideas and forming new alliances across departments.

Who would use Innovation Snacking?
Innovation Snacking is used by everyone in the company, from the CEO to the mailroom staff.

When and why would it be used?
As the name suggests, Innovation Snacking occurs in short, intimate and engaging experiences. It is ‘pushed’ to employees in a non-disruptive way in their immediate working environment (e.g. their desk). It is then up to each person to engage with it.

Knowledge Snacks enable workers to stay informed of current thinking, both internally and with expert external knowledge. The specific Snack might be of particular interest to them or they may just want a distraction for 10 minutes in the course of the working day.

Tool Snacks can be used to create a different mental space, unblocking or disrupting the worker’s mindset. They become part of the worker’s environment (virtually or physically) for longer-term use. Tool Snacks can be used proactively – to inspire new ideas, form new relationships with co-workers, or in an ambient fashion, supporting work in general.
The waiters work proactively across the organisation, gathering ingredients for the Kitchen. They ask questions about work, observe and carry out user research.

1. Collected ‘ingredients’ are supplied to the chef who decides which information to feed back to the organisation.
3 The cooks package this information for consumption, drawing on the tools and methodologies in the Cookbook. Snacks are then sent out to the organisation to engage and inspire.

4 The Snacks are stored in the knowledge resource of the Kitchen, the Cookbook, for future use.
On the following pages we have outlined a series of inspirational examples of ‘Snacks’ produced by the Kitchen – placed within the context of the everyday working environment.

**Format**
Software-based innovation tools accessed through a computer.

**Viral ethnography**
Interviews with people from different parts of an organisation are edited into highlights and distributed internally via email as a ‘Knowledge Snack’. These are sent to people who the Kitchen staff have identified would find them interesting.

**Idea ticker tape**
A ‘snacking tool’ for sharing and developing ideas that works much like a conveyor belt in a factory, transporting objects around a space. Here it allows ideas to be transported across the screens of an entire organisation. Images are dragged onto the scrolling ticker tape and can be commented on as they scroll by on the screen.

**Mood Radio**
A ‘Snacking tool’ for shifting mindsets using music and sound. A series of ‘radio stations’ are accessed through an on-screen radio application, designed to stimulate or amplify a working mood. Workers might tune into the busy sounds of a hectic office when approaching a deadline, or perhaps the calming ambience of birdsong or waves.
**Format**
Desk-based innovation accessed through the immediate work environment.

**Chance encounters**
The Kitchen has matched the profile of two people from different departments within the organisation that they deem could benefit from meeting each other. The Kitchen does not want to force this link – but rather enable a chance encounter for the two individuals to meet under informal circumstances and through ‘coincidence’.

The meeting is orchestrated through an invite left on the desk of both individuals awarding them a small break in the same location and time. Choosing to follow up on this subtle intervention is up to each person, though it does provide the opportunity to form a valuable new social alliance in another department that could bring new insights to the table.
I have to show we are innovative but I don't see anything exciting here.

Nobody here even sees our work. It's just conferences and whitepapers.

So... what are you working on?
I think these two need an opportunity to meet.
What is Fast Food Innovation?
Fast Food Innovation is product-driven support, which gives project teams quick, results-driven solutions. Each Fast Food product is based on a template from the Kitchen’s Cookbook, but then tailored to meet the specific requirements of the project.

Contact with the innovation support service is initiated by project teams. They know what they want to achieve and what the outcome will be.

The menu
Project teams select their requirements from a set menu of design solutions. This menu is web- or intranet-based. It breaks down Fast Food products according to the specific innovation cycle of the organisation, so teams can see what works best at the stage they are at. The menu explains the range of products on offer, how they are best used and shows examples.

After choosing a Fast Food Innovation product, a waiter takes any specific changes that need to be incorporated and communicates these to the Kitchen.

In a relatively short space of time the cooks produce the Fast Food, feeding it back into the project team’s own innovation process.

Who would use it?
Project teams that require a known design-led output for either testing an idea or communicating project outcomes.

When and why would they use it?
Fast Food Innovation is best used at key stages of the innovation cycle. For example, at a design stage to produce quick, simple, engaging prototypes that allow for the testing and iteration of a new concept. This early testing refines ideas and avoids costly failures at a later date.

Fast Food Innovation can also be used to communicate finalised ideas and concepts in an engaging way, generating buy-in within the organisation and providing a solid focus for implementation.

Project teams throughout the organisation may lack the specialised design skills needed to effectively build or communicate their idea. While still retaining ownership of the project they can draw on the resources of the Kitchen to directly support their project goals.
A project team needs a particular product from the Kitchen. The team refers to the web- or intranet-based menu and ordering system which gives a set list of options – explaining what they are and where in the project cycle they should be used.

The order is received in the Kitchen and a waiter meets with the project team to take the specifics of the order. The waiter liaises between the team and the Kitchen for the duration of the project.
3 The cooks draw on standardised templates from the Cookbook to build the output needed, adapting it for the particular needs of the project team. The output is fed back into the Kitchen knowledge resource, the Cookbook, for future reference.

4 Fast Food products are turned out quickly by the Kitchen and soon the project team will have what it ordered. They can use it to test their innovation or to communicate it to the rest of the organisation.
Evidence from the Future

**Definition**
Documentary, spatial or physical examples of future services or systems.

**Format**
A tangible flight ticket that embodies ideas for a carbon-neutral flight service.

**Touchpoint**
Accessed and ordered off the pre-set Fast Food menu on the intranet and specifics of the order are taken by the waiter.

**Timescale**
Quick turn-around as the design is based on a template in the Cookbook.

**When and why would it be used?**
A project team is working on a new service for the airline industry that is ‘wind powered’ – using windmills to offset the carbon produced by aircrafts. In order to gain buy-in from the board to take the project on, they require some ‘evidence from the future’ to help make their idea tangible and real.
Experience Prototype

**Definition**
Dynamic sketch of a future product, service or system, for testing and evaluation.

**Format**
An interactive prototype on a mobile phone for navigating everyday health, such as ‘areas to avoid’ with pollution or a high pollen count.

**Touchpoint**
Ordered off the intranet Fast Food menu, and specifics of the order are taken by the waiter.

**Timescale**
Quick turn-around as the design is based on a template in the Cookbook.

**When and why would it be used?**
The Technology R&D department is developing a location-based service for mobile phones that takes real-time data and matches it with a location to help someone navigate their way through ‘unhealthy’ areas. Implementing such a system is costly, so they want to test how people might interact with it at an early stage and build these findings into their final design.
how does it work?

the board will never buy this!

this will take months to implement

i think we need a prototype...
now this we can sell upstairs

oh - that could work...

how about we make it more...
**Keywords**
bespoke
integrated
long-term
embedded
process-based
co-creation

**What is Gourmet Innovation?**
Gourmet Innovation is bespoke, process-driven support. As it focuses on innovation practice, the final outcome is not pre-set. Unlike Fast Food Innovation, the project team gets a person, rather than a product.

Cooks are embedded into project teams for deep engagement over a sustained period of time. They share knowledge and guide the development of the project, co-creating innovation practice with the project team. An example of such a process, based on our own practice, might include the following four stages:

**Finding**  Researching potential users and markets and exploring new opportunities.

**Mapping**  Focusing the research and pulling out relevant insights to inform future designs.

**Designing**  Creating potential innovations, and testing and iterating ideas to arrive at a final solution.

**Building**  Correctly managing implementation and seeing the innovation through to market.

The cook, whose expertise complements the specific task the team is dealing with, works closely with them while still drawing on the production capabilities of the Kitchen and knowledge from the Cookbook.

**Who would use it?**
Project teams, at both a strategic and operational level, who want to be guided and supported with a design-led innovation practice.

**When and why would it be used?**
Gourmet Innovation is used over the course of a whole project / innovation cycle. The earlier the innovation support team is involved with the project, the more value will be gained from Gourmet Innovation.

Project teams draw on this service offering when faced with a new challenge where previous ways of working do not apply. The cook works with the team to create a new process, guiding them along the path of innovation.

As the Gourmet Innovation service works with teams, in-depth knowledge is embedded into the entire organisation through osmosis – empowering the project team with new skills and new ways of working. In time, they will develop the skills to manage their own innovation practice.
A project team requests help from the Kitchen.

The chef sends a cook with relevant expertise to work with the group. This person is embedded within the project team and works alongside them over a period of time.
Whenever needed, the embedded cook can draw on resources from the Kitchen, knowledge and processes from the Cookbook and the production capabilities of the cooks.

The final output is generated by both the project team and the Kitchen. It may be something bespoke to the specific project or may draw on resources already in the Kitchen’s Cookbook (such as Snacking or Fast Food formats).
Facilitated brainstorm

**Definition**
Exercise in which all members of a group spontaneously and rapidly generate and contribute ideas, guided by a member of the innovation support service.

**Format**
A facilitated event for generating ideas for new product offerings.

**Touchpoint**
A cook (expert in idea development processes) joins the team.

**Timescale:**
Long term – for the duration of the project.

**When and why would it be used?**
The marketing department wants to develop a series of new products that meet specific needs of an exciting target audience. They invite a cook, recommended by the head chef, to join the team for the duration of the project to guide and support them through the process of generating new ideas.
Strategic Journey Planner

Definition
A tool that uses physical objects to explore a strategic development over time.

Format
Custom-made physical tools and processes for exploring new strategies.

Touchpoint
A cook (expert in strategic processes and tools) joins the team.

Timescale
Long term – for the duration of the project.

When and why would it be used?
The strategy department has been asked to develop an approach for how the company can best gain access to emerging markets in China. The issue is particularly complex, with many stakeholders and timescales that must all be taken into consideration. They invite a chef, who they also worked with on a recent project, to help them produce a series of custom-made physical tools and processes to map out and explore the many alternative futures the company can embrace.
how can we break into this new market?

we have a challenging new project coming up

I'll send one of my cooks to work with you. She can help with the process.
Putting it into practice
This research lays the foundation for a long-term and sustainable approach to embedding innovation within organisations. In this publication we have outlined an alternative to current models – a design-led, service-based framework that works in-house to support innovation.

The set-up phase
We envisage two distinct phases in the lifecycle of an in-house innovation support service. In the ‘set-up’ phase, a core team conducts an innovation audit, accessing the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and how design can be used to support innovation. The service’s implementation must be driven by, and adapted to suit, the nature and structure of an organisation, the expertise of its people and its current and future goals.

The run phase
In the ‘run’ phase, the service grows organically and sustainably, supporting people across the whole organisation and adapting to their needs.

Value sets – the changing nature of design in the business world
As the knowledge economy changes the inner workings of corporate businesses, the role of designers will also need to change. Currently, designers tend to shy away from business thinking, but for the two to work together effectively, designers must learn the needs and language of business.

Both design and business must also be able to challenge preconceptions about their different fields, and work in collaboration. The more design skills become integrated into the corporate arena, the more they will be seen as relevant to all areas of business life, rather than simply for the ‘aesthetic good’.
Some key considerations
Based on our research, we see the following as key considerations for successful business and creative collaboration.

- Innovation can be learned through simple processes and tools
- Effective design-led communication is crucial for crossing mental and departmental silos and getting buy-in
- Design can enhance an idea, make it easier to understand and easier to implement
- Early testing and iterating of an idea is essential. This provides the opportunity to get feedback on a concept, improve it and develop it, without having to spend large capital on changing it at a later stage.

Changing organisational cultures
Innovation doesn’t happen overnight – it demands a cultural shift in the way an organisation thinks and works. To achieve this, innovation services should be incorporated discreetly and in a non-disruptive way. Instead of going on a ‘crash diet’ of innovation, it calls for a slow, bottom-up approach, where design processes become integral to the fabric of an organisation, and change corporate culture in the long term.
This research project is a collaboration between InnovationRCA at the Royal College of Art and two industry partners: leaders in innovation, BOX, and world-renowned workspace architects DEGW.

**InnovationRCA**
InnovationRCA is a network set up by the Royal College of Art to link RCA graduates with business to create innovation opportunities. It focuses on developing new knowledge through applied research; new products through design and rapid prototyping; and new practices through innovation training and development. The Research Associates Programme, on which Food For Thought has been developed, is InnovationRCA’s flagship programme in applied research.  
www.innovation.rca.ac.uk

**BOX**
BOX, located at the LSE, draws on academia and merges it with businesses to cross-pollinate ideas. It is not an academic institution but is located in one to draw knowledge from the best of both worlds. BOX raises the game for how people act, think and innovate in groups, right at the working interface of university research and business.

**DEGW**
DEGW is a leading strategy and design consultancy, operating from 12 offices worldwide. Its projects accommodate the implications of the changing nature of work at all scales. DEGW uses its knowledge to help its clients use space more productively, enhance organisational performance and develop solutions, which are adaptable over time. Whether working with government, corporate clients, city planners or developers, DEGW’s focus is on positive change in the working environment.  
www.degw.com

BOX uses specially designed spaces and decision support systems, and offers leading-edge facilitation, coaching, and team-building services. Working – and playing – together with foremost researchers and sector specialists, BOX users quickly and collectively draw new insights, models and strategies straight from the maelstrom of competitive and organisational complexity.  
www.boxexchange.net
Ré Dubhthaigh & Toke Barter are Research Associates at InnovationRCA at the Royal College of Art, London.

Ré’s background is in graphic design and Toke’s in interactive media. Both are graduates of the Interaction Design MA at the RCA.

In 2004, they formed Radarstation, a London-based consultancy specialising in design-led futures – using creative processes to find, map, design and build the future. In October 2005, they returned to the RCA as Research Associates, exploring innovation tools and processes in association with Box and DEGW. In their professional practice they work with a range of commercial, public and academic clients that include Lego, Hitachi, Live|work, Rich Mix, BP, The Department of Trade & Industry, BBC, Future Foundation and Vodafone. www.radarstation.co.uk
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This project was completed with the help of Frances Lewis, Mikkel Lundsager Hansen, Line Lunnemann Andersen, Andreas Mølgaard, Margaret Durkan and especially Clare Meredith and Anja Stub.
**Bottom-up approach** implementation done in small parts, building from the most basic to the complex

**Knowledge economy** international industry that is based on mental rather than physical labour

** Cookbook** the knowledge resource of the innovation support service and organisation as a whole

**Touchpoints** points of interaction between a user and a service

**Crash Diet Innovation** an externally led and short-term approach to innovation

**Scenario** ideas for new products, services or systems communicated through stories

**Design-led futures** using design tools and process to explore and shape the future

**Snacking** small interventions made into an employee’s everyday experience to inspire and help them innovate.

**Evidence from the future** documentary, spatial or physical examples of future services

**Social software** an application that allows people to interact and share content digitally through a computer network

**Experience prototype** dynamic sketch of a future product, service or system, for testing and evaluation

**Stories from the future** potential futures made tangible and emotive through storytelling

**Facilitated brainstorm** exercise in which all members of a group spontaneously and rapidly generate and contribute ideas, guided by a member of the innovation support service

**Strategic Journey Planner** a tool that uses physical objects to explore a strategic development over time

**Fast Food Innovation** product-driven innovation support that provides quick, results-driven solutions from a set ‘menu’

**Viral ethnography** key ethnographic insights distributed in easily-accessible formats

**Gourmet Innovation** bespoke, embedded, process-driven support over a sustained period of time

**Innovation** a process that brings ideas together in new ways in order to form new solutions

**Kitchen** the physical and spiritual home of the innovation support service, acting as both production studio and innovation hub for the whole organisation
Food For Thought is an exploration into innovation practice in corporate organisations, from a design-led perspective. It looks at how innovation is currently viewed in both design teaching and in business, and the benefits of making innovation practice an everyday part of an organisation’s process. To do this, Food For Thought makes the novel and insightful comparison between an in-house innovation support service and the restaurant experience, and how their processes and outputs mirror each other.

Central to this is the accessibility of innovation practice to the entire organisation, from the ground floor to the very top. Through inspirational examples, this book shows how innovation tools and techniques can release potential, bring financial returns and enable true innovation within business.

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