

GEORGE W. ANDERSON

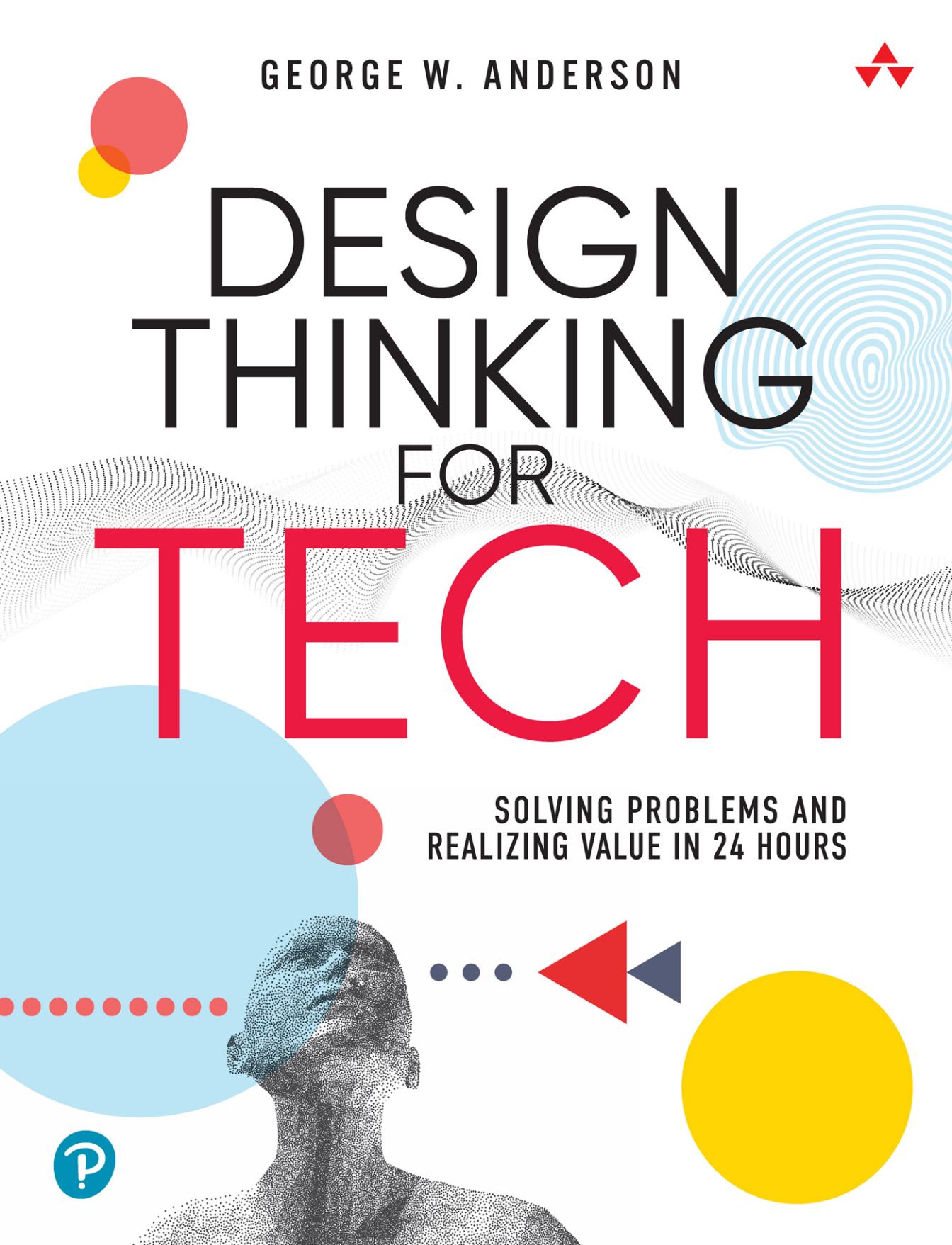


DESIGN THINKING

FOR

TECH

SOLVING PROBLEMS AND
REALIZING VALUE IN 24 HOURS



“In the complexity of creating tech solutions for today’s ever changing and uncertain environments, design thinking is an invaluable tool. In this book, George delivers the knowledge and resources that will help your team develop human-centered and valuable results quickly.”

—Karen Zeigler, *Design Thinking Consultant and Host of “Cultivating Potential” Podcast*

“A terrific practical guide that shows how to navigate unstructured ambiguous situations using proven techniques... 24 hours spent with this book is one of the best investments you will ever make in yourself and for your team.”

—Paul Slater, *CEO and Co-Founder, BillionMinds*

“George lays out the path for IT teams to inject Design Thinking across the project lifecycle to more quickly solve key business challenges, noting that Design Thinking methods should not be relegated solely to designers and UX experts but rather used broadly by the whole tech community for velocity and progress.”

—Bruce Gay, *PMP, Principal and Founder, Astrevo*

“George understands that the most challenging activity for Design Thinking practitioners is getting other people to adopt their ideas. Hour 23 in particular is a great asset for those trying to make sure their change lands and adoption of their ideas is realized.”

—Luis Solano, *Industry Development Manager, Google Cloud*

“The value George brings to the Design Thinking community through *Design Thinking for Tech* is best conveyed in this adaption of a quote from the book: We must capitalize on who we are today, the investments we make in ourselves, and the ability we have to provide value beyond today. Design Thinking gives us that framework for realizing value, and in these pages George walks us through when and how to apply methods within this framework so together we can build the confidence and capabilities necessary to solve the next generation of problems using applied Design Thinking.”

—Sean McGuire, *Billboard Design Thinking Founder, Architect, and Author*

- ▶ With a collection of relevant personas in hand, we can turn to various types of empathy-related exercises to understand those personas better.
- ▶ To better understand these personas, we can also map their micro journeys as they interact with systems and other people today.
- ▶ And finally we can take a macro view of these personas and explore a full “day in the life” of individuals or personas, the ultimate way of understanding the breadth of activities, decisions, and connections that people make day in and day out.

Interestingly, we might practice different types of empathy for different people or groups of personas. Before we organize our personas into a 360-degree model for empathizing, let’s first take a look at three types of empathy.

Three Types of Empathy

As mentioned, empathizing is central to Design Thinking, and there is no one-size-fits-all single way to empathize with others. But there are proven ways to connect and empathize with others using a related set of Design Thinking techniques and exercises.

Consider the following three types of empathy. While each type may build on its predecessor, each one may also be practiced independently. Consider also how empathy manifests itself differently in each type in terms of how the empathizer “shows up,” how the empathizer connects and learns, and finally how the empathizer serves the other person and that person’s community.

- ▶ **Cognitive Empathy.** The simplest form of empathy is cognitive empathy, which is “connecting at a head level” to understand intellectually what another person or team thinks and feels. To empathize at a cognitive level, we typically lean on Persona Profiling, Journey Mapping, and general precursors such as traditional Stakeholder Mapping.

Cognitive empathy *says*: “I see that you have fallen into a deep hole and can’t seem to escape. That can’t be any fun.”

- ▶ **Emotional Empathy.** The next form of empathy connects two people at an emotional level. Emotional empathy lets us share or experience the feelings of another person in the moment. Design Thinking techniques to empathize emotionally include Empathy Immersion, Day-in-the-Life, and other forms of one-on-one connection that allow emotional connections to be made.

Emotional empathy *acknowledges and asks*: “That hole you are in looks pretty bad, and I can see it’s taking a toll on you. How can I help you help yourself?”

- **Compassionate Empathy.** The final form of empathy drives a person to take action. Compassionate empathy is not satisfied with simply acknowledging a situation or helping someone help themselves. Compassionate empathy draws on relationships to compel action. Such Design Thinking exercises might include Empathy Immersion, Journey Mapping, Day-in-the-Life, Building to Think, and getting our hands dirty through iterative prototyping and testing. As we can see, compassionate empathy goes beyond understanding and traditional empathizing.

Compassionate empathy *acts and serves in a side-by-side kind of way* with another: “Now that I’ve climbed into this hole with you, together we will figure out how to escape here and never return.”

Emotions and empathy go hand in hand for two of the three types of empathy. As Dev Patnaik (2022) tells us, “[T]he more emotionally charged an event is, the more vivid it feels to our amygdala, which then helps our hippocampus to hold on to the event for the long haul. That’s why our most emotional memories are also our most vivid ones: Our brains literally encode them more forcefully than they do other data.” Use these realities of the human mind to better respond to emotional events and create emotionally sticky experiences. See Figure 8.1 for a light-hearted but accurate perspective on the three types of empathy.

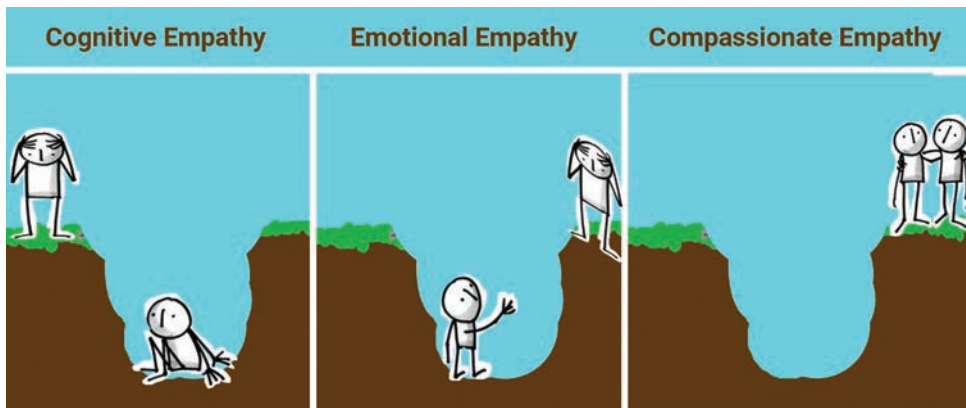


FIGURE 8.1

Empathizing looks very different based on the type of empathy being practiced.

We can see how these three types of empathy build on one another as we move from head empathy to heart empathy to empathy steeped in action. Viewing the hole from a distance (cognitive) is a good start, but it is quite different from acknowledging that the hole exists and is painful (emotional), which in turn is quite different from jumping in alongside a person and helping them escape the hole altogether (compassionate).

With these three types of empathy in mind, let's turn our attention to a comprehensive model for empathizing effectively. Afterward, with a host of Design Thinking exercises at our disposal, we will walk through a recipe for empathizing effectively.

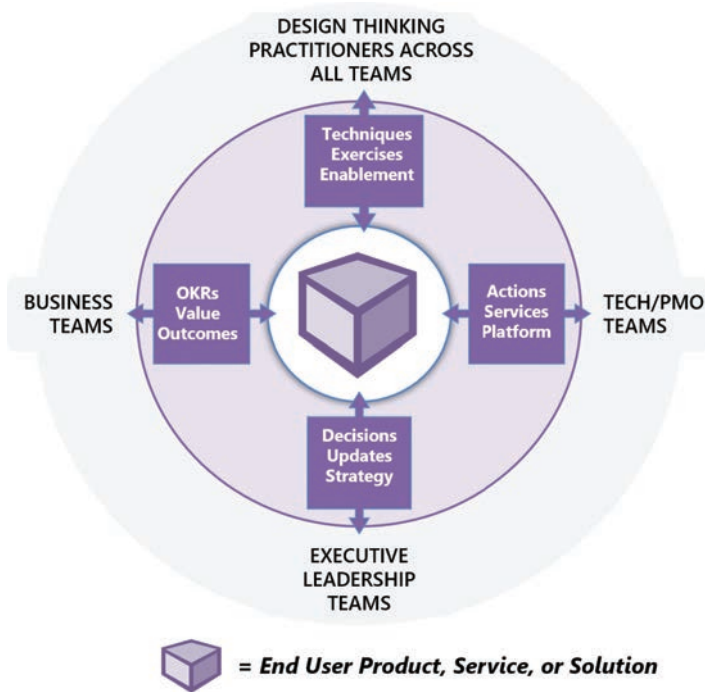
A 360-Degree Model for Empathizing

A good way to build empathy is to walk through the three types of empathy, understanding and connecting more deeply along the way. As we know, the first step for empathizing is to focus on the people who are in the midst of the problem we are solving and therefore users of the solution we will build and the business outcomes that will be delivered. This initial focus is central to everything else we'll do; it provides the problem and outcomes-based focus we need to better connect and empathize with people.

With the "middle" well understood, we next need to take a 360-degree view of the people and teams around the middle (see Figure 8.2). We need to consider our Stakeholder Maps and Power/Interest Grids to identify everyone who will come together to solve the problem, prototype and test potential solutions, and deliver the solution and its business outcomes. Thus, we need to consider the following:

- ▶ The central end user community and collection of personas for whom we're solving a problem and providing a solution
- ▶ The business and operations people, teams, and personas who also benefit from the problem solving and solutioning executed on behalf of their user communities
- ▶ The sponsors, executives, and other key stakeholders and personas who hold the political, budgetary, and sponsorship influence necessary to be successful
- ▶ The Design Thinking specialists, team members, and partners who, together, will help others understand and solve problems, design and iterate on the interim and final solution, and ultimately help create value and enable business outcomes on behalf of the user community
- ▶ The IT and PMO teams and people who will manage, design, build, and deploy the interim MVPs and Pilots and other valuable outcomes, including ultimately supporting the final solution and its user communities

With this 360-degree view in mind, we can turn our attention to the exercises and overall recipe for empathizing.

**FIGURE 8.2**

The 360-Degree Empathy Model for organizing stakeholders.

A Recipe for Empathizing

With our understanding of the three types of empathy and the kinds of exercises most useful for each, we can build a simple recipe for empathizing. And using our 360-degree empathy model, we would apply this recipe—or parts of the recipe—to each group of personas or stakeholders.

Design Thinking in Action: Persona Profiling

Also called Persona Mapping or Persona Analysis, this exercise is intended to help us document, group, and learn more about what our key personas are thinking, feeling, doing, saying, and more. Remember that a persona is a fictional character reflecting an amalgamation of similar people with similar interests and needs. A useful set of personas helps guide our decisions as we consider problems, design and prototype solutions to those problems, and test and iterate on those solutions.

Even though personas are fictional characters, it's useful to assign a face or emoji to the persona as a way to make the persona "real." A face makes the persona easier to remember and use as teams consider the people for whom they are solving problems and designing solutions.

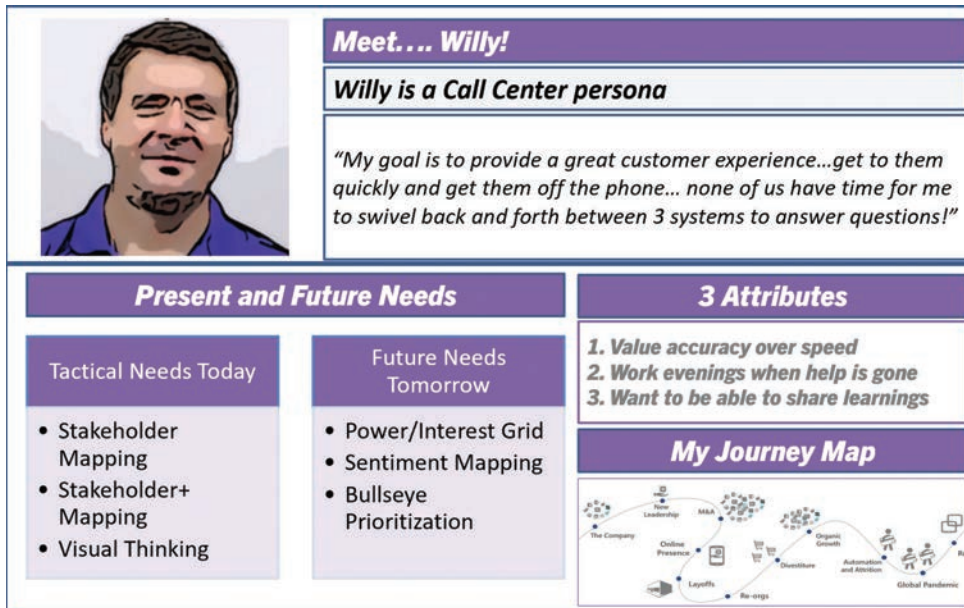
TIME AND PEOPLE: A Persona Profile exercise requires 1–5 people for 10–15 minutes per persona.

To create a Persona Profile:

1. Assemble the Stakeholder Maps and other artifacts that reflect the breadth of people.
2. Organize the people and personas to be profiled into the five groups described in the 360-degree empathy model (end user community, other business stakeholders, executives and sponsors, the Design Thinkers across the various teams or tied to the initiative, and the tech and PMO teams).
3. Further deconstruct these groups into sets of fictional characters (such as "sales users" or "security team" or "executives" and so on). These are our draft personas.
4. Assign a description to each persona.
5. Subdivide personas as necessary to create our final list of personas (and assign a description to any new persona).
6. With these descriptions in mind, give each persona an easy-to-remember name.
7. Assign a fictional face or emoji to each persona as a way to make that persona "sticky" in the minds of the team.
8. For each persona:
 - a. Define their (future) end goals.
 - b. Define their (tactical) needs today.
 - c. Describe up to three distinguishing attributes.
 - d. Assign a verbatim or other memorable quote.
 - e. Include any other summary information, pictures, or figures that give this persona life and further cement each persona in the minds of the team.

By way of example, consider the sample Persona Profile illustrated in Figure 8.3.

If we consider the breadth of stakeholders beyond "end users" connected to a large project or initiative, it's not unusual to create tens and tens of Persona Profiles. Fight the urge to get too granular, though. And remember to accommodate edge cases and consider accessibility and sensitive design needs. Finally, be careful to avoid biases and stereotypes as we pull together the faces and images that represent the breadth of our project's or initiative's personas.

**FIGURE 8.3**

A worked example of a Persona Profile.

Design Thinking in Action: Empathy Mapping

Empathizing with others, including where they have been and what they are experiencing today, is key to learning about people. As we have said before, empathy is how we see the world through another's eyes, or walk in another's shoes, or wear another's hat. Empathy is about learning. And remember that learning is not just about observing and gathering information. Learning is also about listening, understanding, and connecting at a cognitive, emotional, and compassionate level to understand what others are going through and what they need.

A long-standing and visual way of doing just this is through Empathy Mapping. If we have the information we need, we can do this exercise from the safety of our desk. The simple template we use to document this information is called an *Empathy Map*. Create an Empathy Map, one for each persona, to capture and learn more about that specific persona in terms of what that persona is:

- ▶ Likely thinking and probably feeling
- ▶ Likely seeing and hearing
- ▶ Actually saying and doing