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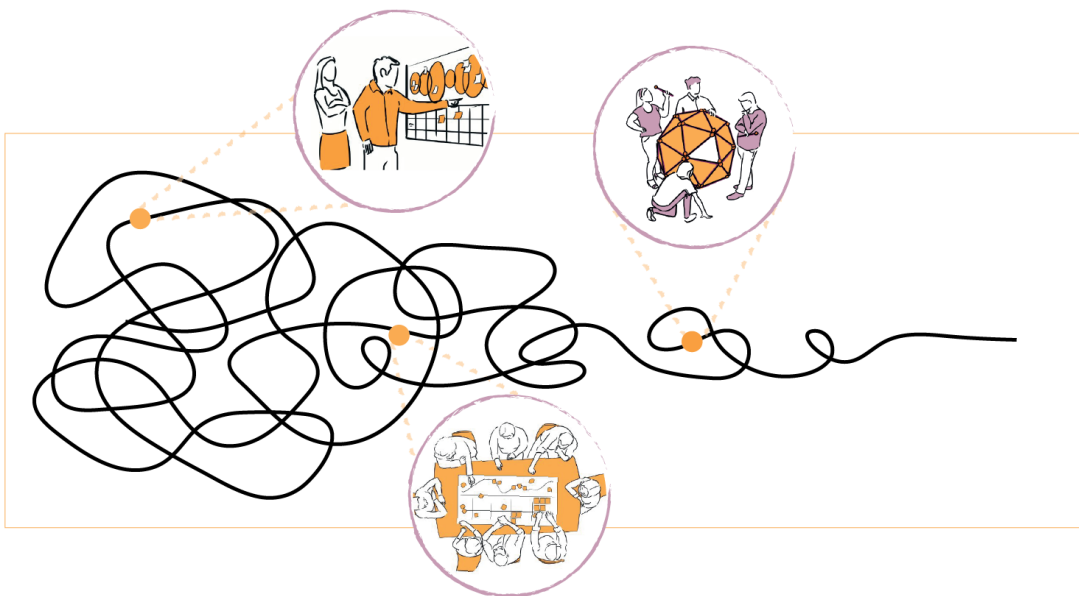
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Co-design: A Powerful Force for Creativity and Collaboration



Stratos Innovation Group Oct 15, 2016 · 5 min read



We can all agree that creativity and collaboration are good things, but not everyone is in agreement on what they look like in practice or the best way to support them.

In a world of increasingly complex problems, collaboration is king. The impetus to work together to create innovative ideas in areas such as healthcare, education and governance is more pressing, and exciting, than ever. These problems require multiple

stakeholders (internal and external) to come together and actively create, in order to improve the systems and services.

Collaboration is more than just tapping into the individual knowledge that internal and external stakeholders possess. It is about discovering their unique, and collective perspectives on the systems in which they live, which makes it vital to create together.

Let's start by talking about some key definitions:

Co-creation

Co-creation is “the joint *creation of value* by the company and the customer; allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit their context.” This may seem like a general term, but ultimately “co-creation” helps identify a more specific type of value-based collaboration between stakeholders and users, in contrast to standard market research.

Co-design

Co-design is the act of creating *with* stakeholders (business or customers) specifically within the design development process to ensure the results meet their needs and are usable. (Co-design may also be called participatory design- a term which is used more often within the design community.)

Many human-centered design firms design *for* people. At Stratos, we put a major emphasis on designing *with* people. There's a fairly big difference in terms of approach. As much as possible, co-design practitioners should bring the people that the outcomes will serve into the design development process. But what does this actually look like in practice?

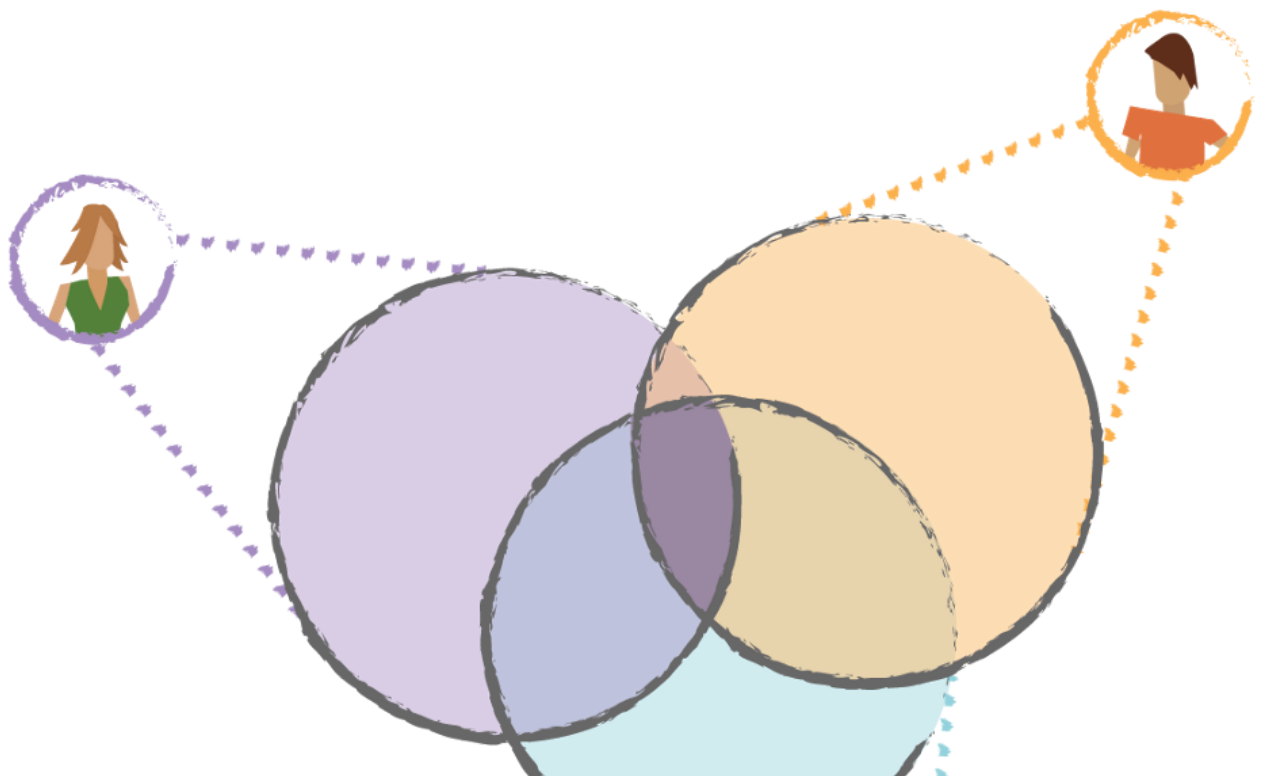
Why Co-design?

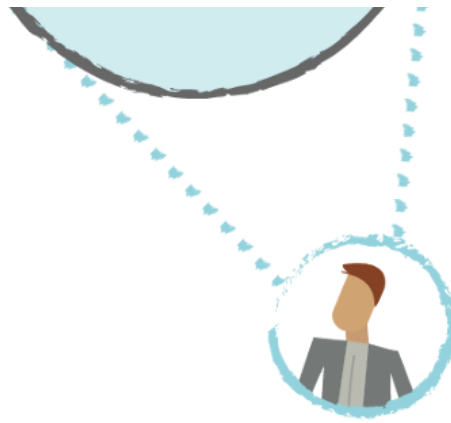
As mentioned previously, the complex challenges our world faces are too great to be tackled by a single discipline. More than inviting designers or engineers into the process, users, customers, patients and other stakeholders, need to be brought in as active co-designers, to confront the big issues and develop actionable ways to improve their current experiences or co-create a new solution.

What Value Does Co-design Bring?

As champions of co-design, we have witnessed the powerful impact that the co-design mindset, approach and tools have had on the outcomes of the work we've accomplished for our clients. Here are a few examples:

- For a multinational financial services company, business leaders, the innovation team, UX teams and consumers were brought together to create the ideal experience for a new insurance rating model.
- In today's rapidly changing media environment, a media outlet engaged Stratos to help break down company silos that hindered production time and effectiveness. This was made possible using co-creation techniques to facilitate collaboration around their future working practices.
- A national industrial product brand minimized risk by co-designing customer engagement ideas, with a new market segment, before investing large amounts of money.
- For a garden products manufacturer, the time needed to develop a mobile engagement solution (app) was significantly reduced by adapting a co-design approach. Researchers, designers, consumers and business sponsors were brought together for a rapid three day test and redesign cycle.





How is Co-design Facilitated?

Co-design practitioners aim to become *design process guides or facilitators*. We leverage our expertise of design and research, but don't let our own ambitions or ideas drive the outcomes. While guiding stakeholders through the design process of ideation and development, we help people develop and raise the fidelity of their ideas. These ideas can then be shared with an external audience not involved in the process.

Where does Co-design Fit in the Design Development Process?

Co-design can take place at any point across the design development process. However, involving people with different perspectives early (and often) can help determine the real problem space early on- leading to more advantageous outcomes. Admittedly, involving multiple stakeholders throughout the process can be challenging, but through a guided process of discovery, ideation and development, we can give a voice to both end users and the people who serve them. By doing so, informants turn into participants, contributors, and partners- and that can have a powerful and meaningful impact on the outcomes.

Who Should be Involved?

Talking about specific roles and responsibilities in co-design is dependent on the context in which we are working. Let's imagine that we are working with a healthcare provider to improve the lives of young people living with type 1 diabetes.

If we are to take a co-design approach to this challenge, we need to bring the different people and organizations together to get a full picture of the opportunity landscape and to co-create new solutions. For example, this group of participants might include: type 1 diabetics, their personal circle of care (parents, siblings, friends), healthcare

practitioners (endocrinologists, nurse practitioners, diabetes educators), schools (teachers, school nurses, bus drivers), and payers and pharmaceutical companies (to name a few). Ultimately, the scope or scale of the project will determine how many stakeholders are represented as well as where in the process they will contribute.

Conclusion

Understanding co-design and its terminologies, applications, and possibilities leads to more successful collective creativity. Our collaborative, cooperative and creative potential hinges on our ability to find common ground, share ideas, use common language and work together to co-create a better world. We live in an exciting world that needs people to work together now, more than ever, to tackle the incredible problems we face. Collaboration is king!

Co-authored by Monica Weiler, Ph.D., Anthony Weiler, & David McKenzie, MFA.

*Have you used co-design methods, before? If so, we would love to hear about your experience and any thoughts you would like to add. **Feel free to drop us a line at monica@thestratosgroup.com or [@TheStratosGroup](https://twitter.com/TheStratosGroup) on Twitter** to learn more about co-design. As always, you can find more on our website (www.thestratosgroup.com).*

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