

How data driven design enables a better future for Higher Education

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Fulfilling diverse needs

Strategy & Consulting

We see strategy as setting the vision and plans for change. We offer bold and informed partnership in discovering, defining and delivering successful future outcomes for your organisation. We'll work with you to make sense of complexities and set an effective strategy that benefits your people, your business and your broader communities. In collaboration with senior stakeholders across the organisation, bringing evidence-based analysis,



knowledge and experience, research and a willingness to step into challenges and opportunities, we'll define what organisational capabilities are required and the journey to establish and evolve them with you, through change leadership expertise.

From the ucisa London session we asked senior leaders "What are the primary areas of focus for the next 12 months"



As you can see from the summary slide, the themes and capabilities we'd suggested for the survey appeared a good fit for the likely priorities for the next 12 months. We also see that across the group these are higher priorities items.

Looking at the details of respondents individually, over 77% gave an overall average priority score of 5.5 or more. Only 7.5% of respondents gave focused answers on 3 or fewer priorities from the options available.

This suggests that the reality of too many priorities to reasonably be able to progress emerges.

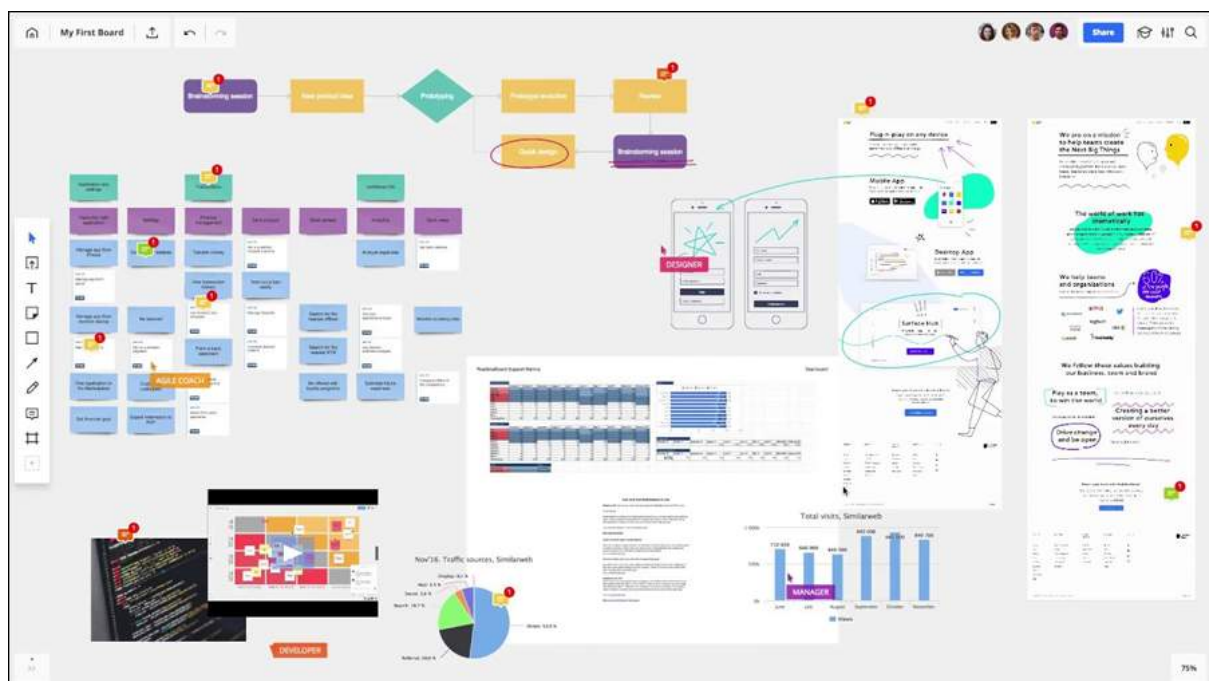
This also helps avoid another common reality in a decentralised environment, where department representatives approach IT and Digital departments with



specific project requests, not readily aligned to overall capability development or organisational priorities.

When defining strategy, we'd urge collaborative sessions to bring together the representation of core stakeholder groups. In these sessions, it is important to establish overall direction and objectives for a reasonable timeframe, perhaps 3 years, as reasonable to visualise, be able to estimate overall activities and achieve outcomes.

One way to achieve this is to bring together representatives from your diverse organisational communities, and either using a digital workshopping tool like [Miro](#) or boards and post-it notes in a physical space, hold facilitated workshops to identify all of the potential future capabilities needs for the organisation when mapped against an overarching strategic goal.



For example, with the goal of increasing student applications by 10% in 3 years, a core capability is the improvement of the student induction process to handle the increased numbers arriving, which in turn may require improvement to online workflows and integrations of student administration solutions. Only once these phases of looking at organisational capability prioritisation have been worked through should the identification of change projects be defined and these must



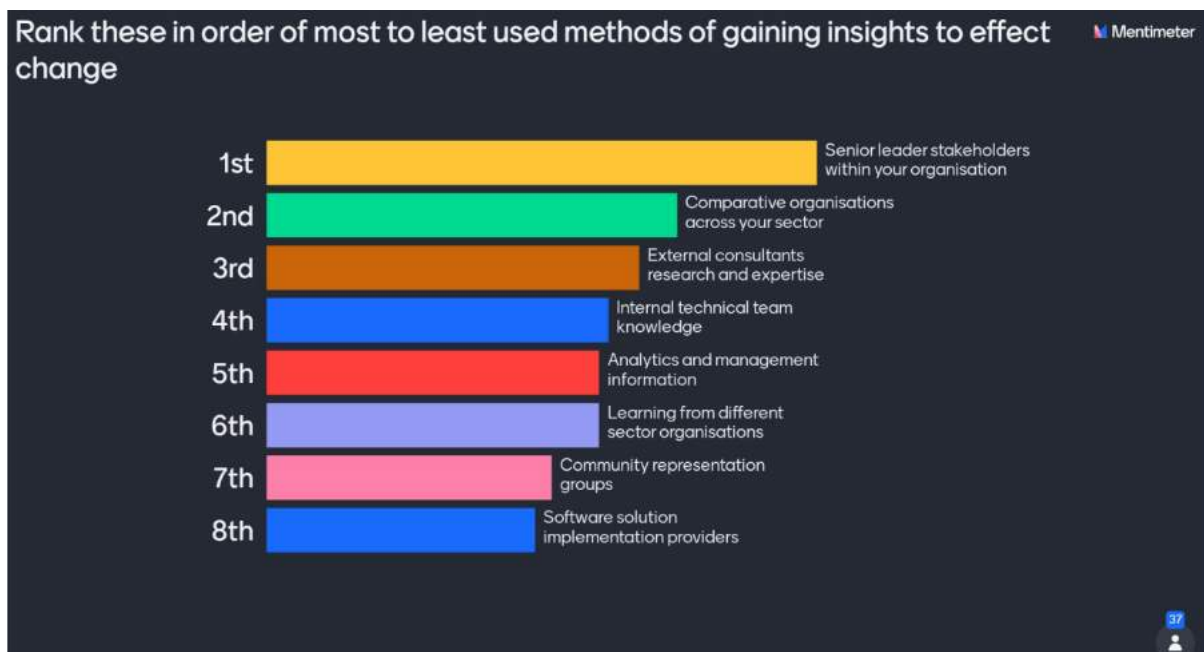
again focus on people, outcomes and capabilities, not purely introduction of systems – see Service Design section.

There are many approaches to prioritisation, some more functional such as [MoSCoW](#), others purely effort and budget related, but in order to best fulfil your organisational objectives overall, and provide services which are fundamentally people focused, we'd advocate ensuring your priorities are driven by representation of your communities internal and external and ensure alignment to organisational outcomes, achieved by improved capabilities and the required capacity.

Service Design

We believe that the core next phase to delivering successful strategic change is the definition of the specific services needed to fulfil your strategy. We totally believe and advocate for the need to look at service definition in a holistic way, bringing together people to workshop and prototype new service definitions factoring in all aspects of people, processes, data, systems and culture and to consider both the physical and digital aspects across them all. Using established design and coaching techniques we will facilitate representatives from across your communities to progressively define and refine the future services your organisation needs to fulfil strategic objectives.

At the ucisa London session we probed this arena of involvement, inclusion and insights from different communities when looking at informing change.



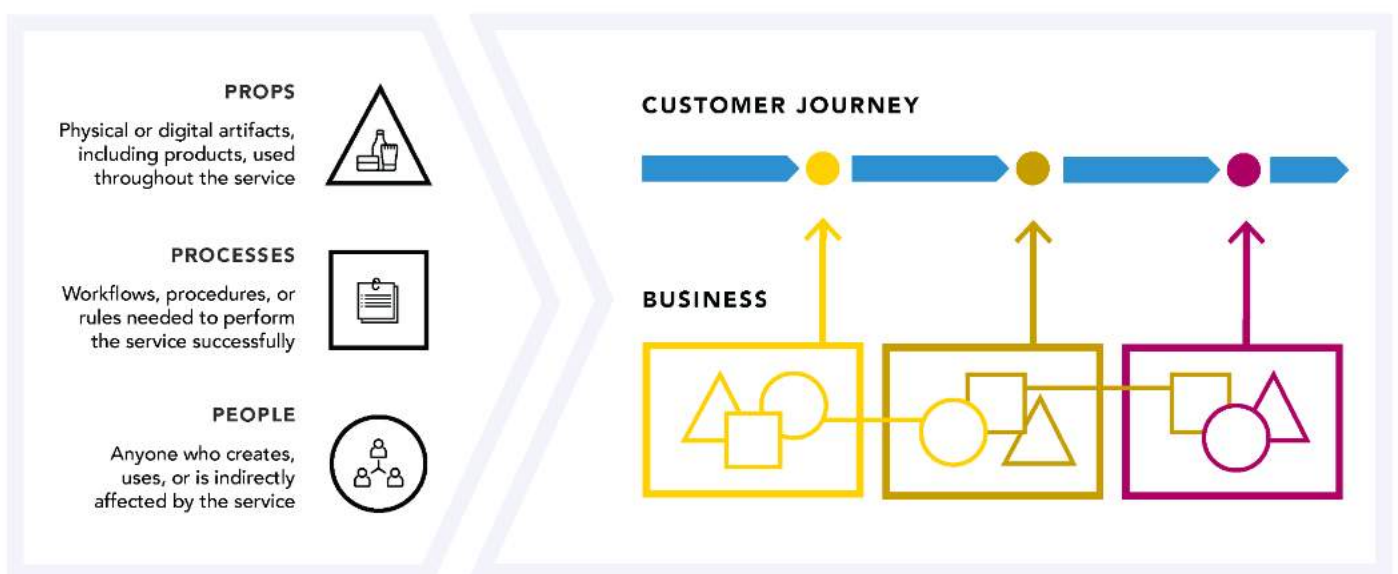
It is immediately notable that the three highest ranked all relate to hearing from or appraising the direction of senior leaders within the organisation, peer organisations or external consultants. Then a cluster of internal knowledge and analytics, before looking out to learning from other sectors and finally 7th ranked speaking with community representatives.

This surprised us and raised concerns. Of course, it is important to a lesser or greater degree to engage with and be informed by all of these communities. However all universities, no matter what their specific strategic direction is, need to collaborate with their community representation groups, otherwise how can they hope to be truly aligned to their communities needs and deliver effective change which will fulfil their requirements.

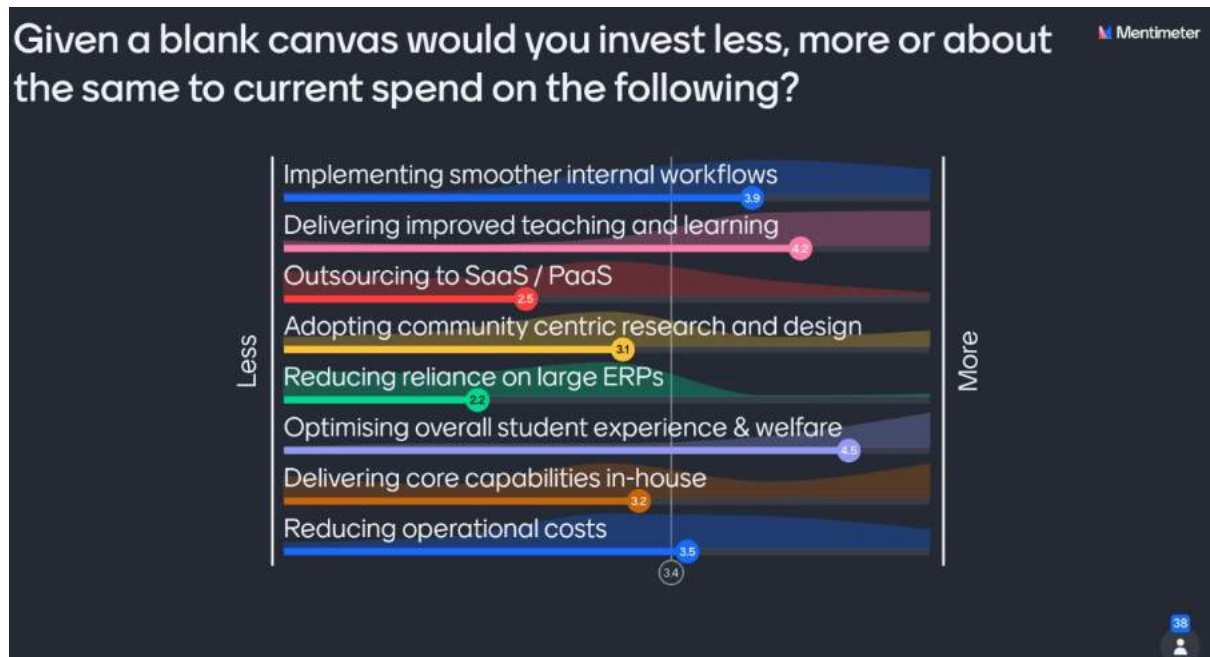
Fulfilling community requirements is what fulfils organisational outcomes most successfully and effectively, not the other way around.

In defining the services, which fulfil the identified organisational capability needs and are engaging, workable and achieve the required mutual outcomes of communities and organisations alike, the use of service design approaches is key.

SERVICE DESIGN 101



Looking at another area of survey data obtained from the ucisa London community in relation to service design, we queried how people would invest in the future, given a blank canvas. The highest two responses were related to improving teaching and learning and student experience & welfare. This is great to see, as they are the primary provisions that universities should be optimising for their students.



However, in the light of the previous findings, although the strategic aims may be to improve these services for students, if the student community is only 7th on the list of insights and inputs into effective change, we would caution that it is very unlikely that implemented changes would reflect well the requirements and user experience expectations of students.

Our recommendation is to foster and actively engage and collaborate with representation of the communities you serve, through strategy definition and identification of required capabilities, and onwards into service design and implementation.



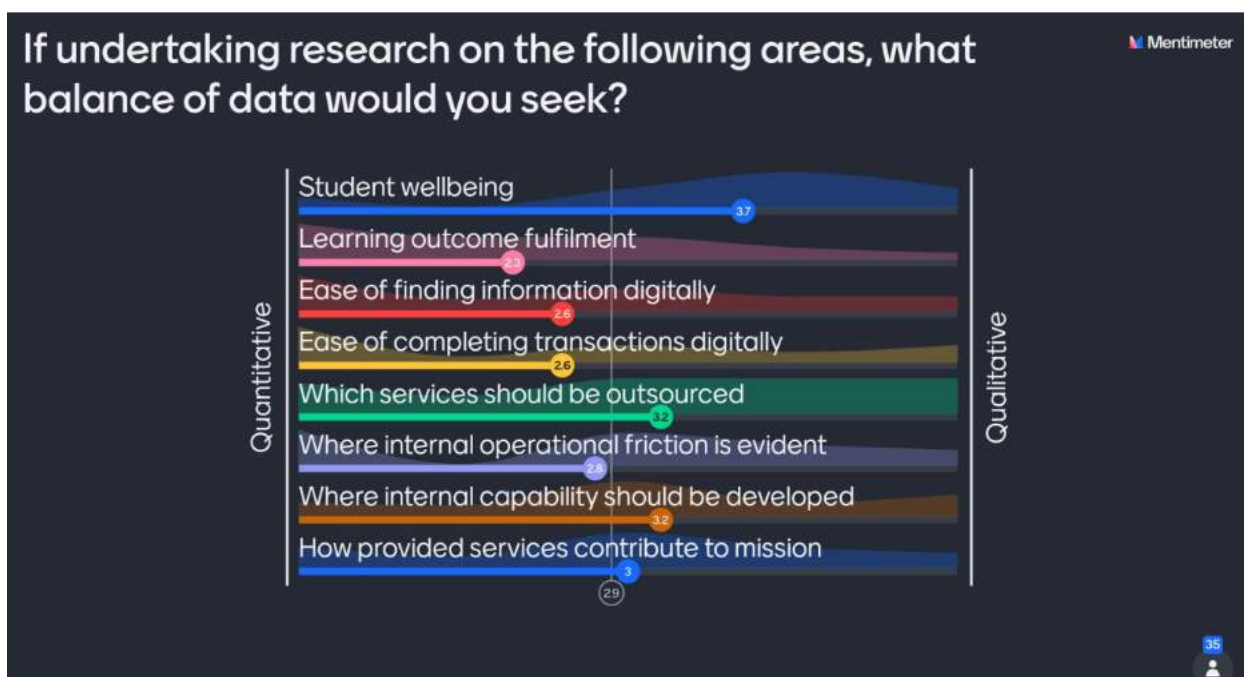
Co-creation & Facilitation

UX Research and design

Creating the visual incarnation (look, feel and overall experience) of the digital services and products to fulfil your strategic aims. Taking the definition of the required digital services, we'll collaboratively create clarification of user journeys and outcomes. We will research the end-communities needs and expectations and bringing together the progressive layers of navigation, site map, information architecture, wireframe, designs, prototypes, content blocks, accessibility, look and feel, branding, content strategy and tone of voice and overall user experience (UX) in fulfilling the brief for the perfect digital touchpoints. Throughout each phase, we'll share, test, listen to the community team and adjust, then iterate again.

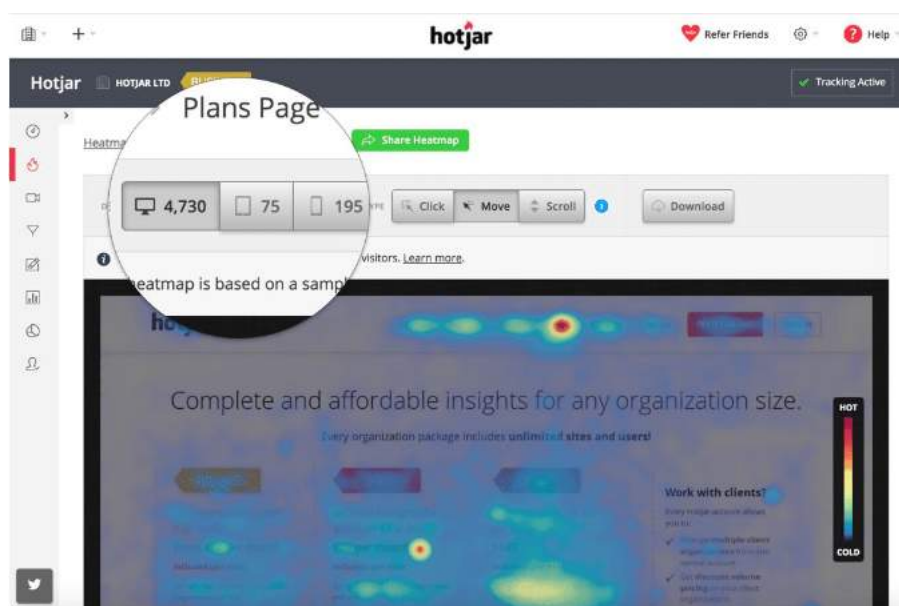
In order to achieve this, again, we would urge that there needs to be collaborative work undertaken to understand needs and expectations, testing and assurance of fulfilment of what online communities need. Without this engagement, how can certainty of providing to community user needs be assured, and confidence that the fulfilment of ultimate organisational goals will be achieved?

The need for insight across the internal aspects of delivering digital services to respond to organisational and community needs was broached and presented the following:



This shows us the group's collective thoughts on where qualitative or quantitative data would be most useful, and in many instances the survey tells us that a balance of both is useful to provide a rich overall understanding of the needs.

We would advocate for using a wide range of data points, both quantitative and qualitative, to inform design decisions. Online tools such as Google Analytics and HotJar allow us to understand from a quantitative perspective how certain web-based solutions are performing, and similar data should ideally be retrievable from 3rd party solutions as the focus on user experience grows.



The next selection of approaches to enable qualitative capture of insights include the addition of a survey into HotJar page monitoring or to move to one-to-one or forum groups appraising how to achieve success with core user journeys or overall solution design aspects, with verbalised and key themes emerging as research progresses.

The merit of having these researched inputs and requirements is that they then may readily become the routes through which evidence of need is shared and promoted, together with the subsequent evidencing of fulfilment.



Technical Solutions

Data, integration and digital products & platforms

We see the greatest strength of solutions being both end-community serving in their design, but also providing the greatest integration, least friction, greatest visibility and lowest risk for the internal teams, whether based on-site or in the cloud.



WordPress plugins and integrations make your site fully dynamic and connect your existing tools.

The continued use of information insights throughout from discovery (research), to design and on to delivery are paramount both for implementation, but also ongoing operational running.

What are the key performance indicators that matter and will equip for ongoing improvement and how might those data points be made available readily for easy measurement and monitoring?

Sharing details of the identified problems and opportunities, evidence of best ways to progress the new service designs and accompanying implementations are all key ways to assist with managing the wider change journey and speaking to peoples' differing need for quantitative and qualitative explanations for why change is taking place and what does it mean for them.



Digital Marketing

We've built something great together, now let's shout about it! We see effective digital marketing as being multiple key ingredients all blended to bring the greatest successful outcomes.

We believe the primary four things needed to ensure successful digital marketing across web, social or email channels are:

1. Strong search engine optimisation (SEO)
2. Great content in a diverse range of accessible formats
3. Exceptional user experience design and plenty of augmenting evidence

We provide all of these key building blocks for you, covering overall digital marketing and SEO strategy, pay-per-click, organic and social media ads, content strategy and copywriting and user experience optimisation. We'll work with you in order to clarify your objectives and the best blend of solutions to achieve them.

6bythree brings the use of data, analytics and evidence to the fore again here as we use or implement solutions that will provide insight into the needs, performance and improvements to be made.

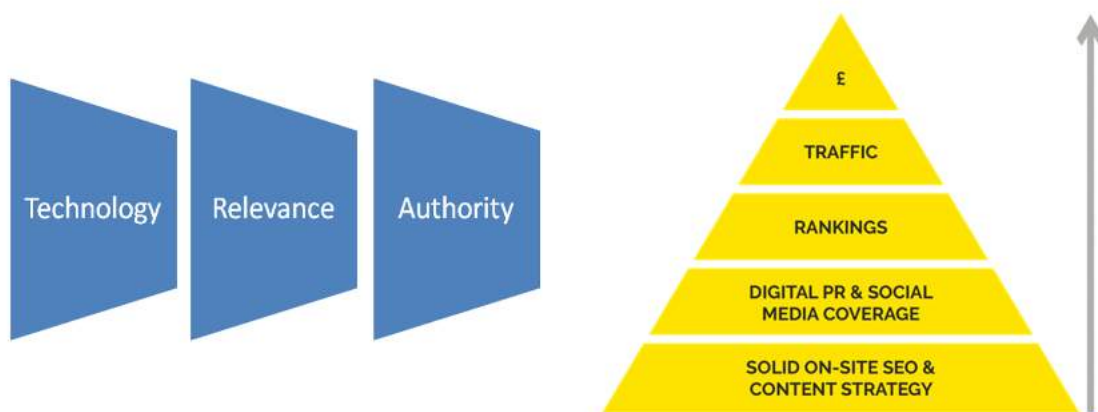
From an SEO perspective our common strategy covers:

1. Technology: can the site be crawled efficiently by Google?
2. Relevance: is the site relevant to the keyword focus?
3. Authority: is the domain strong enough to compete with the market?

We'd plan the needs and ensure we have all the key elements in place to be able to measure and progressively improve the SEO performance, based on metrics and evidence.

The phases for this service are similar to our others. The first step is research, an audit looking at keyword research, competitor analysis, meta-title creation, meta-description creation, site speed analysis, backlink analysis and Google Search Console sitemap submission. We design the optimised solution and





implement and then from then on, we review, collaborate and optimise using traffic and ranking analysis to optimise technical implementations and on-page optimisations.

Capability & Capacity Building

Teach, think and do

The end of one change journey evolves into the beginning of the next.

Throughout every partnership engagement, we undertake we will be working with you to ensure there is capacity and capability established to provide ongoing support and advancement of your services.

This may include support on future team articulation and recruitment, with both permanent and interim coverage optimised against requirements and budgetary needs. Alternatively, the development of training materials in different formats, one-to-one coaching or train the trainer approaches to help your internal team strengthen their skills and knowledge across different leadership, design and technical disciplines. Or perhaps you seek to seed and embed a broader cultural change journey towards using new strategic, service design, design thinking or coaching techniques across your organisation to better equip both operational running and future change activities.

As organisations evolve and new organisational capabilities are established, the need for new organisational structures, teams, skills-sets and process emerge.



However, the resounding theme, expressed in multiple different ways, pertained to data and its utilisation.

Summary

We wholeheartedly agree and encourage anyone reading this blog to advance from whatever your current state is by introducing insights, evidence and community research and testing data to optimise your strategic delivery of optimised and well-aligned services.

In summary, we'd urge you to adopt the approach that ensures future change is informed by insights from multiple sources and to consider:

- 1) What is the organisational strategy you are aiming to contribute to and fulfil? Who are the communities you are serving and how? e.g. can you easily define that and trace a line from each of your team's activities?
- 2) What are the capabilities that your organisation needs and how will you best define them with all aspects of systems, people, data, processes and the wider organisation in mind?
- 3) How are you ensuring you are discovering, defining and delivering the front-facing digital services that your external and internal communities need in a way that both works for them and you? e.g. what does true collaborative design and delivery of future services look like and how can you achieve a culture and capability to achieve that?
- 4) How are you delivering innovative, sustainable, impactful and resilient change to your own organisations and sector, such that together you are breathing life into the impending and aspired disruption? e.g. students as customers are already asking for more and different, what do your responses include?



5) How can you ensure the sustainable ongoing and effective running of your services? What do you deliver yourselves or pass to others to provide? e.g. what does outsourcing the effort, cost and complexity of delivering change or running a greater proportion of your technical infrastructure to others afford you? What might you do with that time, capability and budget?

We hope that having read this, you are well informed about 6bythree, our services and approaches; how pivotal and essential we believe the use of data, insights and evidence to inform, test and assure successful change, from strategy to ongoing service provision; and that no matter where you currently in terms of following these best practices, there are easy steps to adopt them more fully into your change management mechanisms and that help is at hand.

How might you facilitate the definition of people-centric strategy, services and solution designs? Data-driven, evidence-based and user researched and designed are the foundations of your future success.

Information insights can be hard-won, but they are valuable to pursue and critical to you sustainably fulfilling organisational objectives and serving your communities well.

If you are interested to hear more, contact us directly at jon@6bythree.com or [book a call](#) for a one-to-one conversation.

