

*Sodexo*

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productivity through design thinking

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Sodexo is a corporate service provider offering solutions to large business and public sector clients. Its services include food and catering, facilities management, property and technical services, benefits and rewards and home care services. User experience is a core focus for the organisation, and it aims to “improve the quality of life” of the people and communities with which it works.

Nicolas Petitjean is Vice President (VP) of Design for Sodexo Group. He describes Sodexo’s work and why design is essential to creating these services. Service Design, Nicolas suggests, has been at the heart of enhancing productivity within Sodexo by changing the way users, consumers, employees and clients interact with certain tasks and processes.

“Design embraces complexity. How do you capture information from technology, from user needs, from trends, and put all this into one proposal?”

*When discussing service provision, for many, design is not the first thing that jumps to mind. How does design fit into Sodexo's work?*

My core focus is improving the experience that our services deliver. We have to understand the needs of users, consumers, clients and employees and try to find the best path to improving the service. We use a co-design process with some of our clients to ensure we integrate the various stakeholders: users, consumers, employees and clients into the process.

Design in this context isn't about creating a definite product. Instead, we use design thinking to create interactions, experiences and to connect people. We approach these challenges from various perspectives, so design helps bridge and/or break siloed thinking. We create a richer proposal, or better material by connecting people, creating multidisciplinary teams, different angles and perspectives. Design thinking can impact the way you understand things.



“The interesting thing with a design approach is that you're trying to address the problem with different lenses. This can be a way of bridging silos.”

## *How has that process helped with productivity?*

We work to create more sense, value and impact with less friction, pain-points and blockers. We concentrate on how processes are working and how to get the most from them. For example, we might have to produce more products with fewer resources or capabilities while ensuring the product keeps creating value for all stakeholders. We design a better strategy to increase production with the given resources. That's a simplification, of course. Today, that might mean creating a solution using more responsible service blueprints, leveraging our supply chain or producing less waste.

For example, my team and I undertook some work with our audit team. The problem was that people compare audits to going to the dentist: it has to be done, but it's going to be painful! Going through a design process showed that it didn't need to be that way. We created an audit 2.0, something desirable and user-friendly: it simplified the process by understanding the user needs and experience at every stage of the process. Through iterating and testing, the process became even easier and faster. The outcomes we are seeing is that people can work through their audits more efficiently, pleasurably and with less likelihood of errors. We've had great feedback on the new audit process so far.

Another example is our collective work with Sodexo Government Agencies Activity and the Ministry of Defence: *Creating Value by Innovating, Together*.

With the 2019 Armed Forces Attitudes Survey revealing a low sense of community, camaraderie and morale along with dissatisfaction around food quality and overall services, it was clear that change was needed. Working in partnership with the Ministry of Defence UK (MOD), we responded to the challenge. Through in-depth research and understanding of military culture, we created a one-stop, multifunctional hub. The design approach simplified the process by allowing us to understand user needs at a given stage and create actionable experiences and services to implement. In turn, the process was made easier and faster. We pursued a whole design thinking process: working in collaboration with the MOD to understand their priorities. We used quantitative research to define opportunities and challenges for service men and women. We ran co-design workshops to ensure our ideas would land successfully and improve people's journeys. Regular two-way communication ensures final concepts resonate with all audiences and offer the flexibility to translate across languages.



“Today, design is a way to move forward with production and services in more sustainable, environmentally-friendly and systemic ways.”



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