



Turku, Finland
October 2024

MARI JÄRVINEN

Developing Leadership in a Community of Independent Professionals

Case We Love Mondays

Abstract

Developing Leadership in a Community of Independent Professionals

Case We Love Mondays

This study investigated developing culture, practices and leadership dynamics within a community of independent professionals, using the case of We Love Mondays Oy. Key findings reveal that professionals in entrepreneurial communities prioritize autonomy, clear communication, and fair compensation. Leadership in these settings must strike a balance between providing support and allowing independence, recognizing the diverse needs of community members. The research identified three distinct professional personas within the community, each with unique needs and challenges, such as the desire for community engagement, support in administrative tasks, and the need for flexible work environments.

The study explored the concept of Minimum Viable Leadership (MVL), which advocates for minimal but effective leadership interventions that empower professionals without stifling creativity or autonomy. The findings suggest that traditional leadership models may not fully address the complexities of freelance communities, and that leadership should instead be adaptive, emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and support tailored to individual needs. By integrating service design methodologies, the study provides an example of how to develop leadership practices that are responsive to the evolving demands of independent professionals, contributing to a more sustainable, adaptable, and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords

SERVICE DESIGN, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, LEADERSHIP AS A SERVICE, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, DESIGN THINKING

Tiivistelmä

Johtajuuden kehittäminen yrittäjäkumppaniyhteisössä

Tapauskuvaus We Love Mondays

Tämä tutkimus käsitteli kulttuurin, käytäntöjen ja johtajuuden kehittämistä itsenäisten ammattilaisten yhteisössä We Love Mondays Oy:n kontekstissa. Keskeiset havainnot osoittavat, että yrittäjyysyhteisöissä toimivat ammatillaiset arvostavat autonomiaa, selkeää viestintää ja oikeudenmukaista korvausta. Johtamisen näissä yhteisöissä on tasapainoteltava tuen antamisen ja itsenäisyyden sallimisen välillä, tunnistaen yhteisön jäsenten moninaiset tarpeet. Tutkimus tunnistaa yhteisöstä kolme erilaista ammatillaisprofiilia, joilla jokaisella on omat erityiset tarpeensa ja haasteensa, kuten yhteisöllisen osallistumisen tarve, tuki hallinnollisissa tehtävissä ja joustavan työympäristön tarve.

Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin Minimum Viable Leadership (MVL) -konseptia, joka pyrkii pienimmillä mahdollisilla mutta tehokkailla interventioilla tukemaan ammatillaisia ja antamaan heille valtuuksia ilman, että ne tukahduttavat luovuutta tai autonomiaa. Perinteiset johtamismallit eivät välttämättä täysin vastaa itsenäisistä yrittäjistä koostuvien yhteisöjen tarpeisiin, joissa johtajuuden tulisi direktiivisyyden sijaan olla mukautuvaa, yhteistyötä korostavaa, läpinäkyvää ja yksilöllisiin tarpeisiin räätälöityä. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään palvelumuotoilumenetelmiä johtamiskäytäntöjen kehittämiseksi ympäristössä, joka pyrkii vastaamaan itsenäisten ammattilaisten muuttuviin tarpeisiin sekä edistämään yrittäjäekosysteemin kestäväää toimintaa.

Avainsanat

PALVELUMUOTOILU, JOHTAJUUDEN KEHITTÄMINEN, JOHTAJUUS PALVELUNA, ORGANISAATIOKULTTUURI

Opinnäytetyö – Turun ammattikorkeakoulu
Palvelumuotoilun ylempi ammattikorkeakoulututkinto

Table of contents

1	Introduction and notes to the reader	6	3.2.6	Anthropomorphizing as a prototype	31
1.1	Commissioner	8	3.2.7	Value mapping	34
1.2	Background of the project	9	3.3	Bridge – <i>Are we doing this right?</i>	35
1.3	Goals and research questions	10	3.3.1	Content analysis	35
1.4	Data collection	10	3.3.2	Letting the personas speak	37
1.5	Timeline and process	11	3.4	Construction – <i>How can we push ahead, together?</i>	40
2	Frames of reference	13	3.4.1	Culture shift	40
2.1	The author's point of view	14	3.4.2	Applicable leadership paradigms	42
2.2	The Double Diamond	15	3.4.3	Minimum Viable Leadership for We Love Mondays	44
2.3	Design Thinking	16	3.5	Conclusion – <i>What does "done" look like?</i>	45
2.4	The Design Odyssey	17	4	Conclusions and further directions	46
3	The Design Odyssey	18	4.1	The diagram vs. reality	47
3.1	The Beginning – <i>What are we trying to do and why?</i>	19	4.2	Limitations, practical implications and the future	48
3.1.1	Problem scoping	19	References	51	
3.1.2	The Design Thinking Canvas	20	Appendices	55	
3.1.3	Stakeholder mapping	22			
3.2	Exploration – <i>How might we get to where we want to go?</i>	23			
3.2.1	Analyzing survey data	23			
3.2.2	Pain points	24			
3.2.3	Needs	25			
3.2.4	Ideation	26			
3.2.5	Personas	27			

Figures

		Page
Figure 1	Commissioner logo	8
Figure 2	Basic constellation of community builder companies	10
Figure 3	Timeline of the project	11
Figure 4	Process depicted with some key timeline points and division of tasks	12
Figure 5	Illustration of author's point of view	14
Figure 6	Double Diamond	15
Figure 7	The basic process of Design Thinking	16
Figure 8	A recreation of the Design Odyssey process	17
Figure 9	Illustration of a design odyssey	17
Figure 10	Illustration of the beginning of an odyssey	19
Figure 11	The Design Thinking Canvas	20
Figure 12	The Design Thinking Canvas filled out	21
Figure 13	Stakeholder map of WLM's operating environment	22
Figure 14	The most important factors for independent professionals	23
Figure 15	First ideation session around pain points of the survey respondents	26
Figure 16	Professional Persona 1	28
Figure 17	Professional Persona 2	29
Figure 18	Professional Persona 3	30
Figure 19	Illustration of WLM's brand identity	33
Figure 20	An example of WLM's brand imagery	34
Figure 21	Ideation around values, workshop output	34
Figure 22	Schematic of the basic and organizing themes	36

		Page
Figure 23	Ideation around persona needs, workshop output	38
Figure 24	Translated workshop output from the culture shift exercise	40
Figure 25	Translated workshop output from the leadership reflection exercise	41
Figure 26	Five main themes of wishes for leadership	44
Figure 27	Illustration of WLM's role in the entrepreneurial community	44
Figure 28	A recreation of the Design Odyssey process	47
Figure 29	A more truthful representation of the Design Odyssey process	47
Figure 30	Illustration of future directions	49

Tables

Table 1	Pain points with descriptions	24
Table 2	Functional, social and emotional needs of the survey respondents	25
Table 3	WLM's mission and vision	33
Table 4	Themes found in the interview data, codes and illustrative quotes	35
Table 5	Summary of Agile Leadership principles	43
Table 6	Goals with definitions of done	45

Appendices

Appendix 1	Questionnaire	56
Appendix 2	Interview questions	58

1

Introduction

Notes to the reader

What you are about to read is a Master's thesis, but you should not expect a typical academic article. I have written a number of academic papers during my career and when I started putting this case study into words, I realized this is not that type of academic paper. In figurative terms, it felt like trying to place a three-dimensional object on a sheet of paper. As a thesis is essentially a way to showcase learnings from the study program, I have chosen to present these in a more true-to-reality way than a traditional academic paper would. One of my key learnings is that service design is playful, messy, and non-linear. The real world also does not follow an order of theory-execution-conclusion.

One of the choices made based on this realization is the choice of framework for this study. While the Double Diamond and other traditional models of service design are undoubtedly valuable, they sometimes fail to capture the reality of the process. The main framework chosen for this case study is therefore something different, the Design Odyssey, which will be presented in more detail later.

This thesis was written for a commissioner in the hopes that they would be able to use it for their purposes, as-is. Therefore, this thesis does not adhere to all the rules and recommendations given for how to structure a thesis. In this thesis, the theory is interwoven with practical work, presented in each relevant section. Where possible, more theoretical sections are presented with a beige background and more practical work with a blue background, matching the brand colors of the commissioner.

I hope you enjoy reading!

Mari Järvinen



1.1 Commissioner

This project was commissioned by We Love Mondays Oy (later WLM), a company founded in 2017 in Turku, Finland. The core team at WLM consists of the founder and CEO, Katja Hopia, and her daughter, COO Saara-Sofia Hopia. Currently, there are no other salaried employees, but it is possible that the team will grow in the future. The company started as a solo venture run by Katja Hopia, focusing on work counselling and support services to municipalities, typically individuals and teams in the social and health care sectors. The scope of business has since shifted and widened to include B2B services in the private sector, as well as keynotes and other speaking engagements.

We Love Mondays is a community of coaches and trainers who focus on enhancing the well-being of working communities and managers in Finland. They believe that investing in occupational well-being is not only a sensible management strategy but also an economically wise one. The company emphasizes the importance of prevention over correction, underpinned by both research and practical experience. Their mission encompasses improving job satisfaction and the emotional well-being of employees, aiming to inject positivity and enthusiasm into the workplace.

We Love Mondays is currently undergoing a re-branding effort and is planning on expanding first to the Nordics and then to Central Europe. To do this in a more focused and effective way, they want to find out how to become a best-in-class partner for highly skilled professionals. In line with their mission, they want to make the results of this project available for everyone in Finland.

Figure 1: Commissioner logo

1.2. Background of the project - Communities of independent professionals as a part of an evolving labor market

More diverse forms of employment for experts

The labor market today includes many more forms of employment than even a couple of decades ago. One major trend is that many knowledge workers have left organizations to become self-employed and different platforms offer opportunities to work as consultants, contractors, freelancers, or independent professionals. Many decide to work as freelancers because they want more variety or greater challenges, but also to gain more autonomy and independence. As Pichault & McKeown (2019) point out, the number of independent professionals working on a contractor basis has grown exponentially and spread into all sectors, industries, and occupations. According to them, this means that this type of work arrangement can no longer be dismissed as atypical or defined by what they are not, i.e. lacking traditional employment.

Freelancers and the gig economy

Freelancers are individuals who offer their knowledge or services to multiple clients, without establishing an employment relation with any of them. Freelancers have been described as “boundaryless workers” (Tams & Arthur, 2010). Despite the desire for freedom and independence, many independent professionals decide to do all or part of their work through labor market intermediaries (LMIs), which are entities that stand between the individual worker and the organization that needs work done. For highly skilled independent professionals, staffing agencies and consultancies are important actors in work relationships. These relationships can be differentiated into standardized (repeating the same type of tasks) and individualized ones (each assignment being different from the last), reflecting differences between sectors. This differentiation underscores the multifaceted nature of freelancers' interactions within the gig economy (Ruiner et al., 2020).

Community builder companies

An increasingly common model in the marketplace of independent professionals is that there is one company who acts as a community builder. In these types of models, the community builder aims to not only provide a link between independent professionals and clients, but also foster a sense of community around the work and bring people together in a setting which often resembles a consultancy company. Paradoxically, as communities are formed and processes formed around project management, quality control, and client support, the group of independent professionals working through a community builder LMI becomes increasingly like a traditional organization. In addition, the LMI becomes a de facto client of the independent professionals, while also distributing work among them and acting in many ways like a manager would. This company often has a team who can assess the client's requirements and find the right freelancers to fulfil those needs. As the relationship with the client is shared, it means that intermediaries transform the work relationship from a dyadic one to a triadic one and challenge existing paradigms of employment relationships (Bonet et al., 2013).

For the company taking the role as community builder, and consequently the end clients, working with independent professionals brings many benefits that traditional employment would not. Through these professional communities, clients have access to a wider and more diverse talent pool than they otherwise would. For the client, it is convenient to have a selection of pre-vetted freelancers or consultants with various skills and expertise. This allows the end clients to find the right professionals for their specific project needs without the effort of searching extensively. This saves time and is efficient compared to hiring professionals directly. In addition, the community builder company often handles administrative tasks like contracts, payments, and invoicing, relieving clients of administrative burdens associated with working directly with freelancers. Community builder organizations can also offer added security for clients by having contingency plans or replacement options in case a freelancer becomes unavailable during a project.

1.3 Goals and research questions

As the communities of independent professionals increasingly resemble traditional organizations, an interesting challenge in the working relationships is the question of leadership. How should the community builder company lead the group of independent professionals so that they want to stay in the community, instead of working on their own, or finding another community? Interestingly, the literature is scarce on how leadership in these communities is developed, how the needs of the independent professionals are met, and how the triad of client-intermediary-professional works in delivering services for clients. The purpose of this commissioned project is to shed light on these aspects, as well as utilize service design tools and methods to develop good ways to structure a professional community that breeds mutual success to both the community builder company and the independent professionals. The research questions are the following:

- What are the needs, pain points and expectations of independent professionals who join an entrepreneurial community, and how are their wishes met?
- What do independent professionals prioritize when joining entrepreneurial communities, and are there different needs within the target group?
- What kind of leadership is needed in entrepreneurial communities of independent professionals?
- How should work be organized in communities of independent professionals?

This study is a case study of a company working with an agency model where, in addition to a business model built around acting as an agent for independent professionals, there is an intent to build a community around these entrepreneurs (yrittäjäkumppaniyhteisö in Finnish). This is depicted below in Figure 2. These types of constellations are most likely to exist in highly skilled professional fields. To keep the focus on the field where the commissioner operates, the data collection focuses specifically on entrepreneurs working in communities centered around wellbeing at work in the Finnish market.

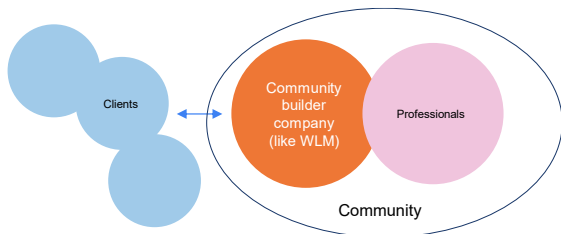


Figure 2: Basic constellation of community builder companies

1.4 Data collection

To explore the role of community builder organizations, and their work relationships with independent contractors, a mixed-methods study design was used. To narrow the scope of the study, the focus was on actors in the areas work well-being and organizational psychology in the Finnish market.

To gather quantitative data on the experiences and preferences of independent professionals who have worked through this type of LMI, a targeted online survey was conducted (Appendix 1). The survey was anonymous and only relevant background data, such as years of work experience, was collected. Invitations to the survey were distributed through personal networks of the writer of the thesis and the commissioner, as well as through invitations on social media platforms such as LinkedIn. The survey was posted online and open to everyone, but screening questions were used to ensure the respondents belonged to the target group. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

In addition to the survey, four thematic interviews were conducted to provide more in-depth and nuanced insights. To gather diverse insights, it was decided to conduct interviews with not only professionals collaborating with the commissioner, but also some independent professionals not associated with the commissioner. Two of the interviewees were independent professionals associated with WLM, while two had not worked with WLM but had experience from several other entrepreneurial communities. The interviewees had worked with multiple types of assignments, from coaching and work counselling to psychological assessments and other types of consulting work for companies in Finland and abroad. Any identifying data discussed in the interviews was omitted to ensure confidentiality.

Each interview was 45-90 minutes long. The interviews were structured according to themes (Appendix 2) but the conversations were allowed to flow freely. Attention was given to keeping the questions open and giving center stage to the participant's narrative (Stickdorn, 2018b). The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by converting audio into written text. This resulted in 73 pages of transcribed text. Any identifying data was removed in the transcription phase. The written text was subject to analysis with the help of the qualitative analysis tool ATLAS.ti, where a thematic analysis, similar to that proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001), was used. This method is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.3.1.

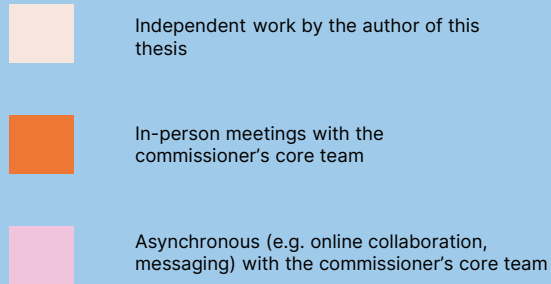
To enhance the validity of the analysis, initial findings were shared with the commissioner during workshops to verify if preliminary interpretations align with their experiences. This phase was therefore part of the co-design process conducted together with the commissioner.

1.5 Timeline and process

The table to the right illustrates the overall timeline of the project. The content and results of each phase and workshop will be discussed in later chapters. The project was initiated in August 2023, when the overall scope was discussed with the commissioner. This coincided with the first draft of the thesis plan being written.

The official kick-off was organized as part of a community meeting, where the preliminary goals and aspirations were presented. The survey was launched immediately after the kick-off. Workshops were organized as new data became available and could be used as material for further development of concepts and ideas. The interviews were conducted after the community meeting, where two interviewees volunteered to participate.

The colors in Figure 3 represent different modes of working, as decoded below.



The division of tasks is further illustrated on the next page in Figure 4, together with a more detailed overview of the division of tasks. Emphasis was put on co-creation, as merely using empathy to try to meet users' needs can lead to designer-led solutions that do not correspond to real-world needs (Vink & Oertzen, 2018).

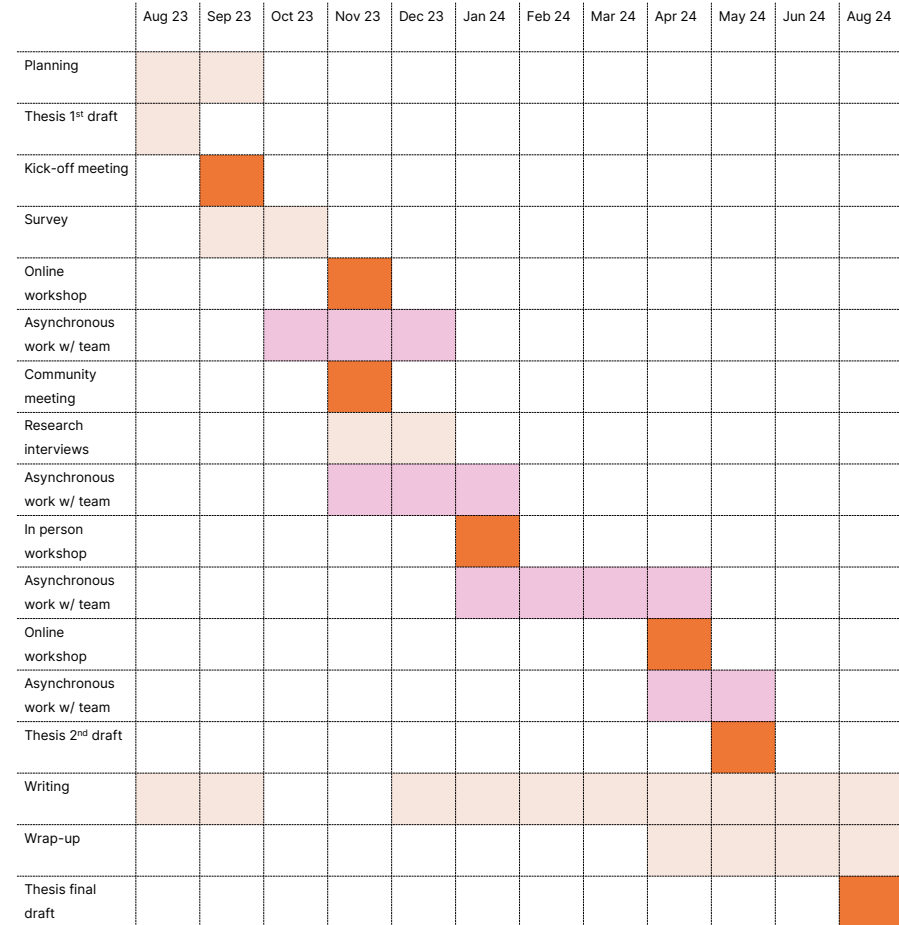


Figure 3: Timeline of the project

The picture below illustrates a general overview of the process from the start to where this commissioned project ended. The top level is a general description of key points in the timeline. The timeline is an approximation. As mentioned earlier, an important shift happened when the Design Odyssey was chosen as the primary frame of reference of the project. Unlike conventional models that typically follow predefined steps like initiation, planning, execution, and closure in a strictly sequential manner, the Design Odyssey framework embraces a more iterative, exploratory approach. As will be discussed later, the decision to employ the Design Odyssey framework allowed for a more dynamic, creative, and user-focused project outcome.

The area below the arrow depicts an overview of some of the service design methods used, as well as describing roughly how the work was divided between the author of this thesis and the commissioner team. While the interviews, desk research, survey analysis and the qualitative analysis were the responsibility of the author, most activities were collaborative. Workshops were organized together with the commissioner team and the community meeting additionally included a group of independent professionals who have been working with WLM. Workshops were held both online and in person, and personal communication occurred digitally throughout the project.

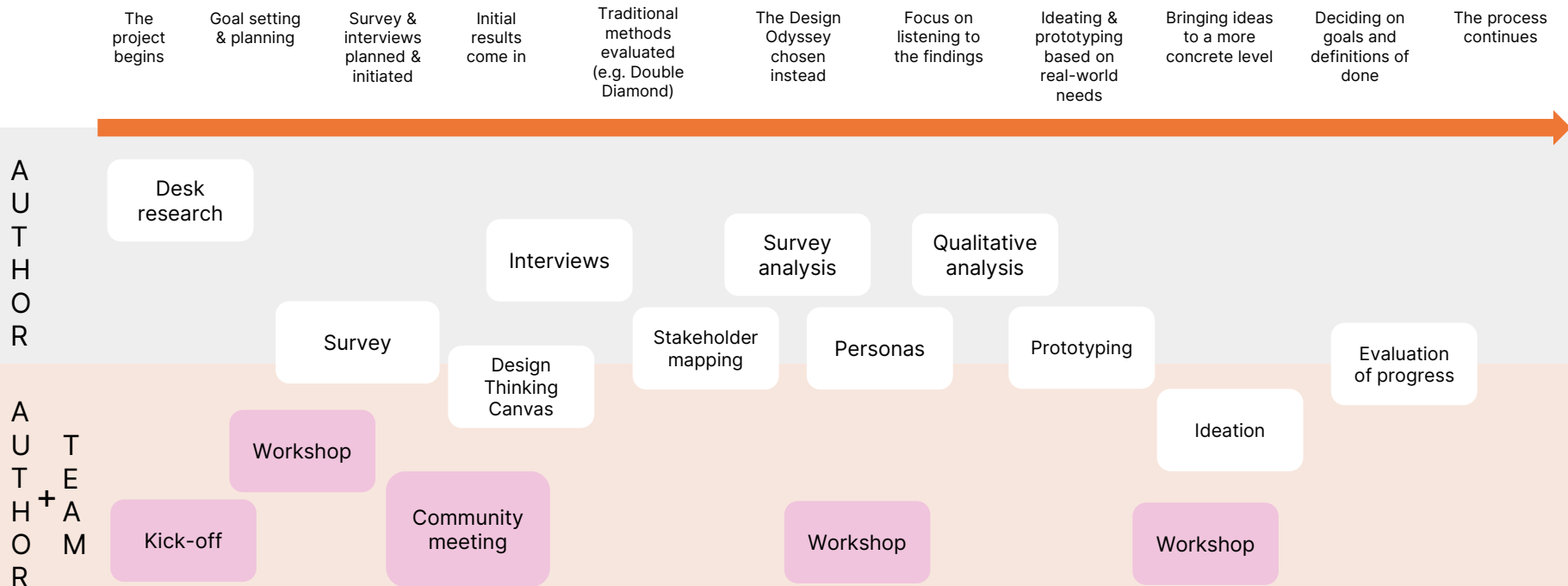


Figure 4: Process depicted with some key timeline points and division of tasks

2

Frames of reference

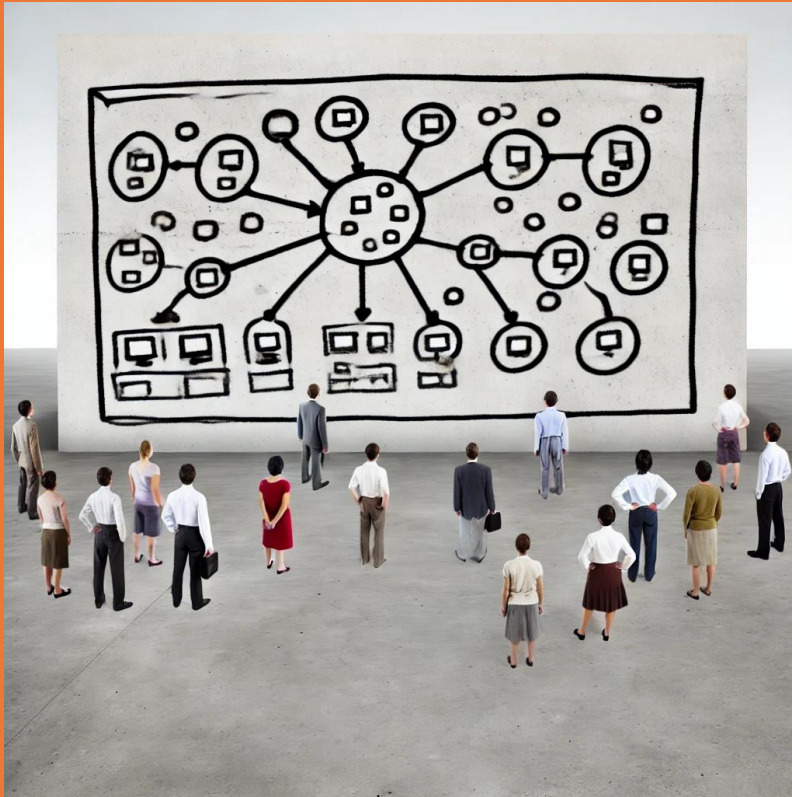


Figure 5: Illustration of author's point of view. Image generated using the prompt "Create an image that represents people looking at a phenomenon like an ecosystem map of a company from multiple points of view" by OpenAI, DALL-E, 2023

2.1 The author's point of view

The author is an organizational psychologist who has a background in leadership development and coaching, working with organizations of many types. She has also worked in multiple communities of independent professionals herself, giving her first-hand experience of both good and bad practices, from the point of view of a freelancer. Combined with her professional background, this experience inevitably influences her investigation into leadership within communities of independent professionals. During her studies of service design, it has been her goal to integrate service design tools and practices with approaches familiar to organizational psychologists. The research methods chosen for this study reflect her experience with both quantitative and qualitative research, although the scope of this commissioned project has not been as detailed as a purely academic study would have been. There is a clear commitment to evidence-based conclusions while acknowledging the value of individual experiences.

During recent years, the author has worked extensively in the field of startups and scaleups, which are known for their adaptive approach to business practices. This has led her to believe that to respond to the demands of today's fast-moving business environment, any models or practices need to be adaptive and flexible, as well as human-centric and focused on empathy. This study aims to offer new perspectives on leadership development in non-traditional work environments.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of design and innovation, many frameworks have emerged, each offering a unique lens through which to approach complex problems and create meaningful solutions. Among these, the Double Diamond and Design Thinking stand out as methodologies that have significantly influenced how organizations and individuals navigate the process of innovation. Exploring them in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, but this chapter will outline them on a general level and then contrast them with a newer approach, the Design Odyssey, which was chosen as the framework for this project.

2.2 The Double Diamond

One of the most famous frameworks for service design is the Double Diamond, which is a visual and structured approach to design and problem-solving, widely recognized within the fields of design and innovation management. Introduced by the British Design Council in the early 2000s (Design Council, n.d.), the framework delineates a process that expands and contracts through four distinct phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. The process is illustrated in Figure 6. This metaphor of a double diamond captures the iterative process of diverging and converging that characterizes the approach to tackling complex problems.

The Double Diamond framework emphasizes the importance of balancing divergent and convergent thinking, promoting a holistic view of problem-solving that integrates both creative exploration and analytical decision-making. It advocates for a user-centered approach to design, urging designers to deeply understand the needs and contexts of the users for whom they are designing. Through its visual and process-oriented structure, the Double Diamond framework serves as a guide for designers and innovators to navigate through the complexity of problem-solving, ensuring a thorough exploration of both the problem space and the solution space (Design Council, n.d.)

In the first phase, Discover, the emphasis is on opening the problem space to explore a wide range of possibilities and insights without a predetermined outcome, encouraging an expansive thinking mode. This is followed by the Define phase, where insights gathered during the Discover phase are synthesized and the problem is clearly articulated, setting the direction for ideation. The Develop phase then diverges again into exploring multiple solutions, experimenting, and iterating on ideas. Finally, the Deliver phase converges upon a tested, refined solution that is ready for implementation (DigiArk, 2020).

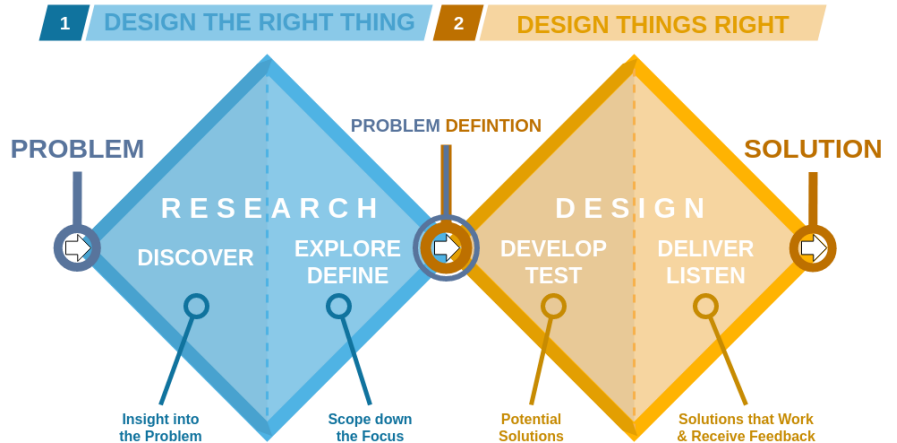


Figure 6: Double Diamond (DigiArk, 2020)

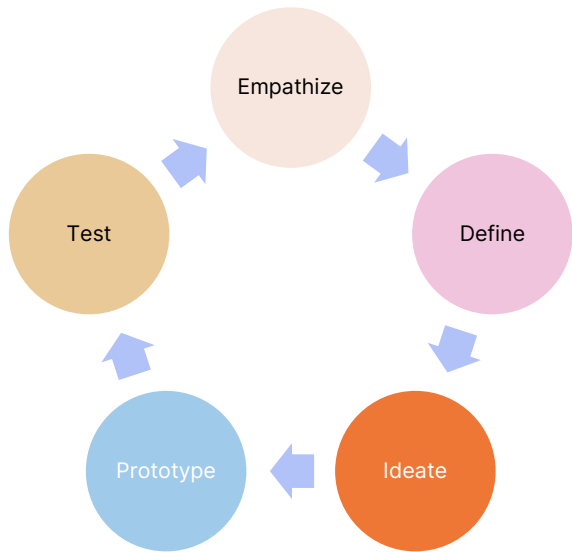


Figure 7: The basic process of Design Thinking (modified, The Interaction Design Foundation)

2.3 Design Thinking

Design Thinking is an iterative, human-centered approach to innovation and problem-solving that integrates the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success. Originating from the field of design, it has gained widespread adoption across various disciplines for addressing complex challenges. The process is often depicted as a sequence of stages, typically including Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test (The Interaction Design Foundation, 2024). This process is depicted in Figure 7 above. However, as Design thinking is more of an approach than a method, the exact terminology and number of stages can vary.

The academic foundations of design thinking can be traced back to the work of Herbert Simon in the 1960s, who introduced the concept of "The Sciences of the Artificial," which laid the groundwork for understanding design as a systematic process. Additionally, Richard Buchanan's seminal 1992 article "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking" further articulated the interdisciplinary and holistic nature of the approach (Dam & Siang, 2022).

At its core, Design Thinking starts with the Empathize stage, where the focus is on understanding the experiences and needs of the users through observation and engagement. This empathy for the user is fundamental to informing the subsequent Define stage, where insights are synthesized, and the problem is clearly articulated. The Ideate stage encourages generating a wide range of creative solutions, fostering divergent thinking. Following ideation, the Prototype stage involves creating tangible representations of solutions, which are then explored and evaluated in the Test stage. This testing with users leads to insights that may loop back into any previous stage, emphasizing the non-linear and iterative nature of the process.

Design Thinking champions a user-centric approach, advocating for a deep understanding of the user's needs and behaviors as the foundation for innovative solutions. Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser (2009) emphasize the dual aspects of empathy, delineating them into affective and cognitive dimensions. The affective component is related to the emotions and feelings experienced, whereas the cognitive aspect concentrates on the assimilation and perspective-taking capabilities. Gasparini (2015) elaborates that emotional empathy emerges from an innate, affective, communal, and reflective experience, enabling individuals to resonate with the emotions of others. Conversely, cognitive empathy entails an understanding of others' experiences from their unique viewpoints. These components are integral for the development of products or services that accurately align with the user's needs. It encourages multidisciplinary teams to collaborate, leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise.

The Design Thinking process is characterized by its emphasis on rapid prototyping and testing, allowing teams to fail fast, learn quickly, and iterate towards more refined solutions. By balancing creative exploration with analytical rigor, Design Thinking aims to create solutions that are not only technically feasible and economically viable but also desirable from a user perspective (Brown, 2008; Vinney, 2023).

2.4 The Design Odyssey

The traditional models like the Double Diamond and Design Thinking, while pioneering in their time, have been critiqued for their linear and overly structured approach to the inherently non-linear and exploratory nature of design (Lipiec, 2022), for separating the problem space and solution space (Godesky, 2023), and for being too abstract (Ramsden, 2023). The Design Odyssey framework, as introduced by Ryan Ford (2022), is inspired by the epic journey of Odysseus as detailed in Homer's "The Odyssey" and presents a more realistic and adaptable method that mirrors the actual process of design work. This framework, depicted in Figure 8 below, acknowledges the complexity and unpredictability of design projects, emphasizing exploration, iteration, and the overlapping phases of design work. It is built on the belief that leadership in design is not about enforcing a rigid process but facilitating a journey of discovery, learning, and adaptation. By choosing the Design Odyssey as a framework for this thesis, the aim is to explore how leadership can be developed through service design methods that embrace the unpredictable, iterative, and human-centered nature of design, thereby offering a more flexible and responsive approach compared to traditional models. This choice reflects a shift towards acknowledging the design process as a dynamic odyssey rather than a predetermined path, which is particularly relevant in the context of service design's focus on addressing complex and evolving user needs in non-product-related situations.

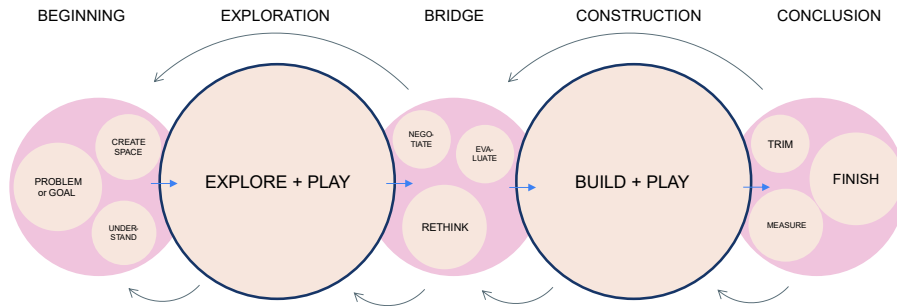


Figure 8: A recreation of the Design Odyssey process depicted in the blog post by Ryan Ford (Ford, 2022)



Figure 9: Illustration of a design odyssey. Image generated using the prompt "create an image depicting an odyssey in the context of service design, emphasize the journey nature of it, use no words in the image" by OpenAI, DALL-E, 2023

3

The Design Odyssey

3.1 The Beginning – *What are we trying to do and why?*

In his description of the Design Odyssey Framework, Ryan Ford (2022) delineates a sequence of phases that collectively encapsulate the non-linear journey of design. The initial phase, termed "The Beginning," marks the start of the design endeavor, where problems or goals are identified and spaces for understanding are created. This stage is characterized by activities and considerations such as recognizing customer and business needs, fostering user empathy, gathering data and research, and overall planning. The essence of this phase lies in questioning "What are we doing and why?".

3.1.1 Problem scoping

The first step in the Beginning phase with the commissioner began with an initial discussion to define the project's overall scope, goals, and aspirations to set the groundwork for the planned activities. Emphasis was put on aligning the preliminary interpretations and emergent themes from personal experiences and emergent with the commissioner's goals for the project. A main goal was to ensure that the project's objectives are mutually understood and agreed upon. In line with Ryan Ford's thinking, the emphasis was on *creating space* for emergent findings, as well as attempting to *understand* the landscape in which these findings emerge.

In this project, the methods chosen for this phase were the following:

Goal	Method
	Problem scoping
Understanding	Design Thinking Canvas
	Stakeholder mapping
	Survey planning
Creating space	Interview planning
	Content analysis planning



Figure 10: Illustration of the beginning of an odyssey. Image generated using the prompt "create an image that depicts the beginning of an odyssey and scoping the problem" by OpenAI, DALL-E, 2023

3.1.2 The Design Thinking Canvas

The concept of the Design Thinking Canvas, a structured tool used to facilitate user-centered problem-solving and innovation, was significantly popularized by the design and innovation consultancy IDEO. Although IDEO did not invent design thinking, they played a crucial role in mainstreaming it through their application and refinement of the methodology. Tim Brown, Executive Chair of IDEO, emphasized integrating human needs with technological possibilities and business requirements as the core of design thinking (Ideo, n.d.).

The Design Thinking Canvas is a structured framework designed to enhance innovative problem-solving by placing a strong emphasis on user-centric approaches. This tool integrates various elements that collectively foster a holistic understanding of the challenges at hand, facilitating the development of effective solutions. Central to its utility is the ability to capture and organize insights related to user needs, pain points, and aspirations, thereby ensuring that the resulting solutions are rooted in real-world contexts. Additionally, the canvas promotes a collaborative environment where multidisciplinary teams can converge to brainstorm, iterate, and refine ideas. Its visual nature aids in mapping out complex problems and streamlining the ideation process.

As can be seen in Figure 11, filling out the Design Thinking Canvas involves several key steps: identifying and involving the right people (stakeholders, users, and team members), establishing clear communication channels for storytelling, defining the core problems to be solved, and recognizing potential opportunities. The process begins with understanding challenges and documenting them, followed by pinpointing a specific problem to verify and articulate clearly. Solutions are then brainstormed, validated, and detailed. Throughout the process, management strategies are identified to monitor progress, and the vision for the project is outlined. Finally, the anticipated impact of the project is defined, with metrics for measuring success established. This approach ensures that all aspects of the project are considered and aligned towards achieving the desired outcomes.

The visual nature of the Design Thinking Canvas builds on some key design principles, such as *balance* (visual appeal), *alignment* (sense of order), *proximity* (connection of elements), *repetition* (consistency) and *contrast* (drawing attention), which help guide the team through the phases (Canva, n.d.).

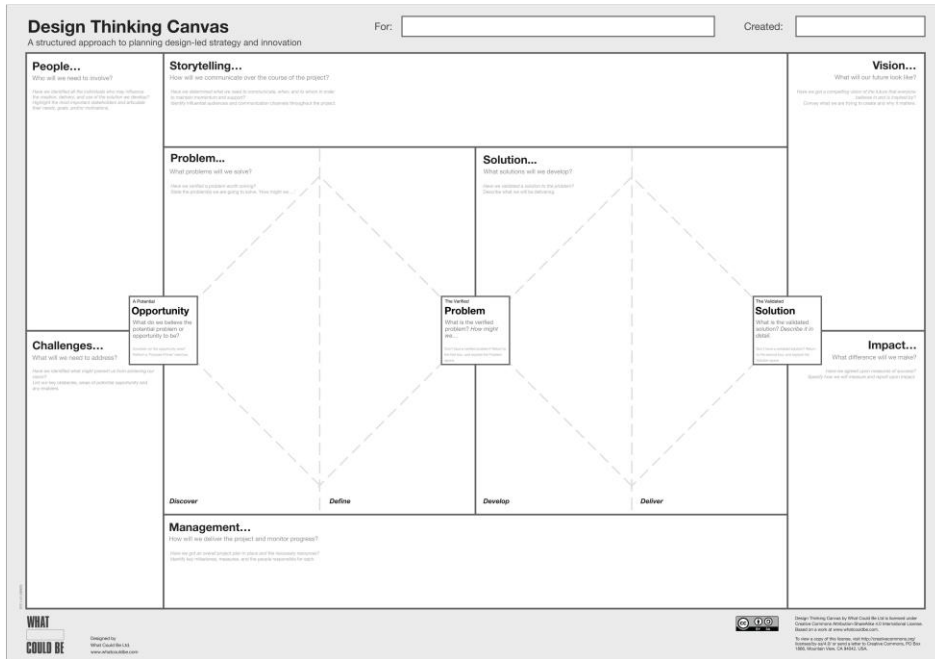


Figure 11: The Design Thinking Canvas (What Could Be Ltd., n.d.)

Design Thinking Canvas

A structured approach to planning design-led strategy and innovation

For:

Created:

In this project, the Design Thinking Canvas was used for the initial phases where it served as a useful planning tool for setting the stage for the rest of the Odyssey. The key components of the work were:

Empathy building. The team engaged in understanding the users and their needs. This step involved planning the gathering of insights through methods such as interviews, surveys and workshops to capture the professionals' experiences and pain points.

Problem definition: Based on the insights gathered, the team identified some core issues that could be articulated as problems or opportunities, setting the stage for ideation and solution development.

Practical planning: The first steps of planning the Odyssey journey began here, even though not everything was set in stone yet.

Setting a purpose: As an exercise in future forecasting, a desirable end result was outlined, along with a vision and mission statement. This provided the project with a horizon to look forward to.

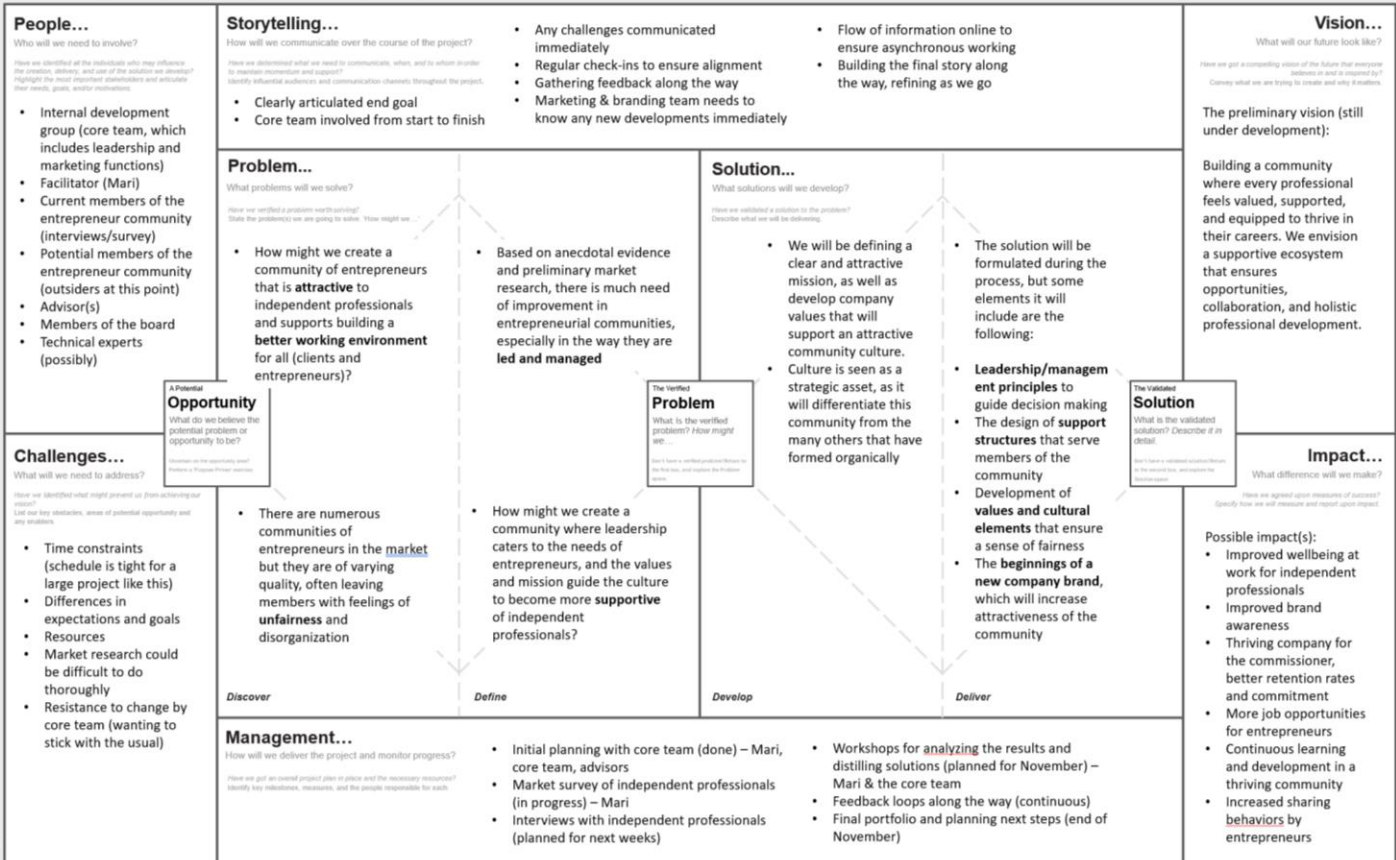


Figure 12: The Design Thinking Canvas filled out (What Could Be Ltd., n.d.), contents Järvinen & We Love Mondays, 2023

3.1.3 Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping is an analytical tool in the realm of project management and organizational strategy, facilitating the identification and categorization of individuals, groups, or entities that have a vested interest in the outcomes of a project or business initiative. This process both aids in recognizing who the stakeholders are and assesses their levels of influence, interest, and potential impact on the project's success (Cramer, 2019; Alves, 2022).

For this project, the choice was made to center WLM in the stakeholder map to analyze the operating environment from a very practical level. Central to the diagram seen in Figure 13 is WLM, surrounded by independent professionals (Pros), clients, and other community members, illustrating the complex network of relationships that sustain the organization. The map highlights the interconnections between WLM and its primary stakeholders: independent professionals who rely on WLM for client connections and administrative support, and clients who benefit from the professional services offered by the Pros. It also depicts the broader context, including regulatory bodies and external communities, underscoring the multi-layered environment in which WLM operates. This map was co-created with the commissioner team.

Emerging findings from the stakeholder map indicate several key tensions that need to be addressed to ensure the smooth functioning of WLM's ecosystem. One significant tension arises from the dual role of WLM as both a support system and a mediator between independent professionals and clients. This role requires balancing the interests of the Pros, who seek autonomy and fair compensation, with the needs of clients for reliable and high-quality service. Additionally, the map reveals potential friction points related to communication and coordination, particularly as the community expands and diversifies. Ensuring transparent and effective communication channels, as well as equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, will be critical in mitigating these tensions. These insights underscore the necessity for continuous feedback loops and adaptive strategies, as discussed in the Design Odyssey framework, to maintain alignment between stakeholder needs and organizational goals.

The triadic relationship between clients, independent professionals and WLM is a pivotal element in understanding the dynamics and operational structure of the entrepreneurial community facilitated by WLM. This relationship is characterized by a delicate balance of interactions, responsibilities, and expectations among the three parties. The triadic relationship is central to the operation of this entrepreneurial community but can also be a source of significant tension, as WLM primarily owns the client relationship but the professionals are the ones delivering the services. As the intermediary, WLM is responsible for acquiring clients, understanding their needs, and matching them with suitable independent professionals within the community. This centralized ownership allows WLM to maintain quality control, streamline administrative processes, and ensure a consistent client experience. However, independent professionals also build direct relationships with clients during project execution, which can enhance trust and satisfaction, but also raises a question about who actually owns the relationship outside of the financial relationship.

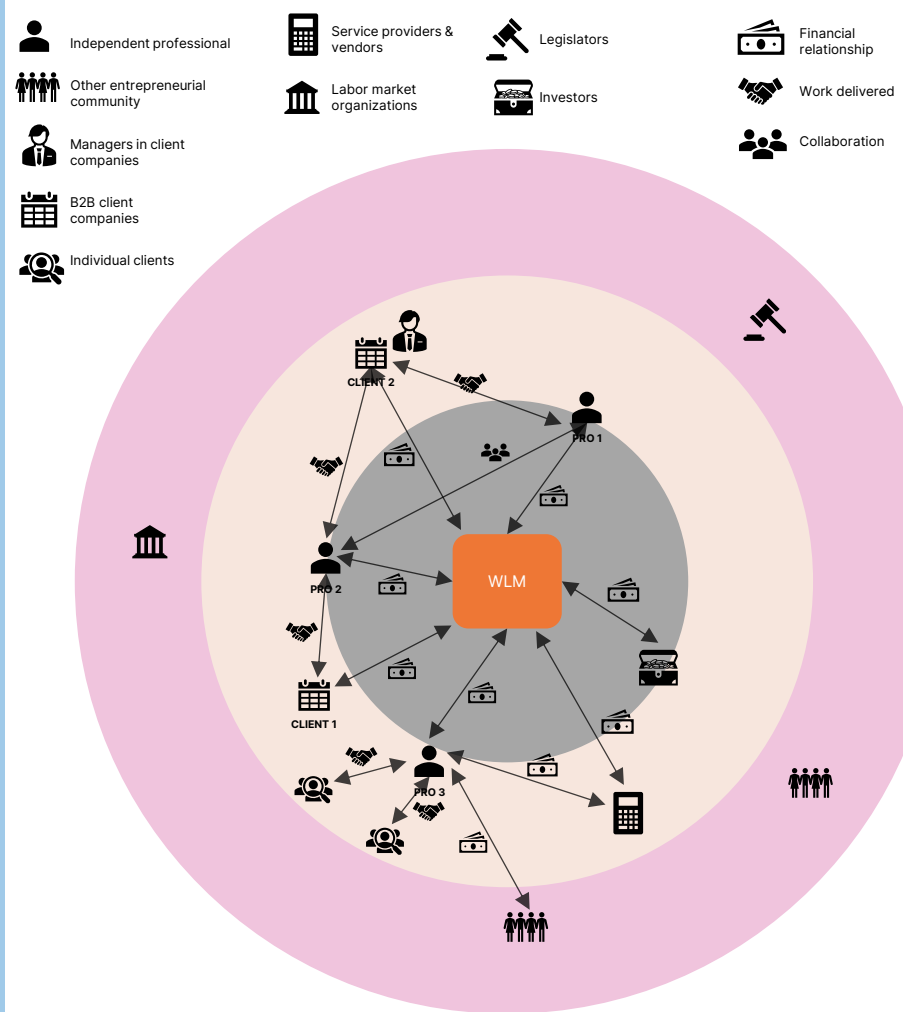


Figure 13: Stakeholder map of WLM's operating environment

3.2 Exploration – *How might we get to where we want to go?*

Progressing into the "Exploration" phase in the Design Odyssey framework (Ford, 2022), the significance of playfulness and the readiness to engage with ideas is emphasized, even at the risk of failure. This phase is depicted as a period of creative divergence, where tools such as wireframes, flowcharts, high-fidelity designs, prototypes, and collaborative efforts come to the forefront. The central query of this phase is "How might we get to where we want to go?". In this project, this phase included diving into the survey data to get a first glimpse into priorities held by the professionals in entrepreneurial communities. This data was then used as a backdrop for creating personas that depict the different needs.

3.2.1 Analyzing survey data

As can be seen in Appendix 1, the survey questions were a mix of open-ended and choice questions. In the short time available, the survey received respondents from 20 independent professionals. Four of them reported to be male, 14 female, and 2 preferred not to say. 40% of the respondents had worked in communities of independent professionals for 1-5 years, 25% 6-10 years, 20% 6 months to a year, and the rest either less than 6 months or over 10 years. 44% had worked in 2-3 communities, 28% in one community, and 28% in 4-5 communities.

As a first step of exploration, question 7 (*Which of the following are the MOST IMPORTANT factors for you in entrepreneurial communities?*) of the survey was examined. The options are presented below. It should be noted that the respondents were instructed to select up to five options in each question.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sense of community | <input type="checkbox"/> equipment and systems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sharing information | <input type="checkbox"/> project management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> events | <input type="checkbox"/> contracts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> acquiring work | <input type="checkbox"/> help with pricing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a wider client base | <input type="checkbox"/> sales and marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> support in challenging client situations | <input type="checkbox"/> advice for running a company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work spaces | <input type="checkbox"/> participating in public tender processes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> support for wellbeing at work | <input type="checkbox"/> compensation for work |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> percentage of total billing |

Which of the following are the MOST IMPORTANT factors for you in entrepreneurial communities?

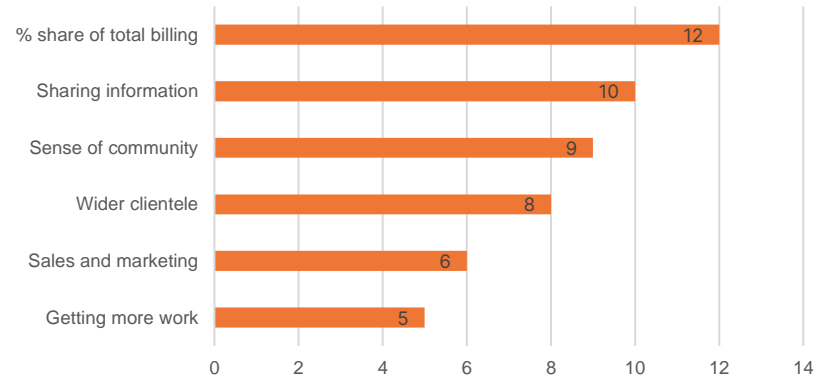


Figure 14: The most important factors for independent professionals

Figure 14 depicts some of the priorities selected by the respondents. From this initial glimpse into the data, it seems clear that the needs of the independent professionals are varied and include very practical aspects such as client acquisition and monetary compensation, but also aspects belonging to the social sphere of entrepreneurship, such as a sense of community.

It seems fair to assume that aspects of communities deemed *most important* can be described as needs presented by the respondents. Thus, this data will be further explored and analyzed in chapter 3.2.3, together with other questions reflecting the respondents' needs with regard to entrepreneurial communities.

3.2.2 Pain points

Pain points are specific problems or challenges that individuals or organizations face, which cause significant inconvenience or dissatisfaction. Effective identification and mitigation of these pain points are crucial for fostering a supportive and productive entrepreneurial environment. According to Harry Wray (2023), Director of Customer Experience at Zendesk, customer pain points can be separated into four categories:

1. Process
2. Financial
3. Support
4. Product

Process pain points are related to internal procedures that hinder the customer's journey, such as complicated transactions or disorganization. Financial pain points are related to the cost of doing business with the company, such as hidden fees or over-the-budget costs. Support pain points refer to interactions with how issues are resolved, product knowledge, and response times. Product pain points are any perceived problems with the product or service, such as inconsistent quality or features not matching needs.

Customer pain points, if unresolved, often lead to disengagement from the product or service. While entrepreneurs as members of entrepreneurial communities are not technically customers, it seems fair to assume that significant pain points also influence whether they continue working with a specific community. In a second step of exploration, we turned to some of the open-ended questions to find answers to why people had decided to discontinue collaboration with an entrepreneurial community. In this survey, pain points were most clearly assessed by questions 14 and 15:

Question 14: Which aspects of these communities have caused challenges for you?

Question 15: If you have previously left one or more entrepreneurial communities, why did this happen?

As both questions were open-ended, direct quotes are available to illustrate the respondents' experiences (freely translated by the author):

"Leadership: Mistrust in the leadership of the entrepreneurial community."
– Female, 31-40 years old

"Lack of communication, instead of feedback I heard nothing when things didn't go well." – Male, 41-50 years old

"I didn't feel as though I was seen as an independent entrepreneur, instead I was treated like an employee. Pricing." – Female, 41-50 years old

"I spent a lot of time on it but the results were poor." – Male, 41-50 years old

"The activities or services seemed unethical, or there wasn't enough work available. Inadequate compensation." – Female, 41-50 years old

"The compensation has often been unfair – the amount left for the person doing the work is too small. I have also felt like a resource, instead of having a reciprocal relationship." – Female, 31-40 years old

As can be seen in even this small sample of quotes, all of Wray's pain point categories are present in entrepreneurial communities as well. The pain points discovered in the responses to questions 14 and 15 were summarized as follows:

Pain point	Description
Lack of independence	Entrepreneurs in the sample felt like they were treated like employees rather than independent entrepreneurs.
Leadership and trust	Distrust in leadership and broken trust, ethical concerns about activities or products, differing values. Unclear contracts. Lack of support. Competition among entrepreneurs.
Financial fairness	Low or unfair pay, financially unviable collaboration. Uncompensated extra work.
Workload misalignment	Assignments misaligned with personal goals, insufficient work, excessive workload, and stress.
Communication issues	Poor communication leading to misunderstandings, ambiguity in projects, difficulties in getting assistance when needed.

Table 1: Pain points with descriptions

3.2.3 Needs

Understanding customer needs involves identifying and addressing the desires, expectations, and requirements that customers seek from a product or service. These needs often stem from functional or emotional motivations and are critical in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty. In contrast to pain points, which are often described as specific problems or frustrations that hinder the feeling of satisfaction, customer needs encompass a broader spectrum of what drives customer behavior. Addressing pain points effectively can alleviate customer dissatisfaction, but understanding and meeting customer needs holistically is essential for creating long-term value. Therefore, while pain points focus on mitigating negative experiences, the understanding of customer needs requires a proactive approach to enhancing positive experiences and ensuring overall customer satisfaction.

Customer needs can be categorized into three main types: *functional needs*, which focus on the specific tasks or functions customers are trying to accomplish; *social needs*, which relate to how a product or service affects the customer's status or image; and *emotional needs*, which involve the feelings or emotional states that customers seek when using a product or service (Gibson, 2022).

In this project, our goal was to scope out the needs of the independent professionals by asking what they had valued when part of entrepreneurial communities (question 13 of the survey), as well as wishes for a community they may join in the future (question 17). In addition, we turned back to question 7, where we found information about what the professionals found most important.

Question 7: Which of the following are the MOST IMPORTANT factors for you in entrepreneurial communities?

Question 13: Which aspects have you perceived as positive when being part of entrepreneurial communities?

Question 17: If you were to join an entrepreneurial community now, what would you wish for?

The table on the right (Table 2) summarizes the main findings from the responses to the open-ended questions 13 and 17. As can be seen in Figure 14 presented previously, similar categories can also be seen at the top of the "most important" listing, with share of total billing, sharing information, and sense of community being at the top. While practical in nature, it can be argued that the share of billing and information also carry social and emotional components, as the pain points discussed previously highlight a need for fairness, communication and alignment.

Need type	Description
Functional needs	Clear structures, competence-related work opportunities, and transparency in operations. Ease of operations and logistical support. These responses reflect a desire for well-defined roles, efficient work processes, and fair compensation. For example, the need for "selkeitä rooleja ja työn osuuksista sopimista" (clear roles and agreement on work shares) and "selkeyttä, suunnitelmallisuutta" (clarity and planning) are indicative of functional needs.
Social needs	Community, partnerships, and collaboration. Shared success, credibility with clients. This includes a desire for "aitoa kumppanuutta" (genuine partnership), "yhteisöllisyyttä" (sense of community), and "yhdessä tekemisen iloa" (joy of working together). These needs relate to how individuals perceive their relationships within the professional environment and their need for mutual respect and equality.
Emotional needs	Appreciation, recognition, and trust. Work-life balance and autonomy. Respondents expressed the need to feel valued, such as in the statement "voisin kokea arvostusta - että minun panokseni on tärkeä osana isompaa kokonaisuutta" (I could feel appreciated - that my contribution is important as part of a larger whole). Moreover, the need for "luottamusta, kepeyttä, hauskuuttakin" (trust, lightness, and even fun) underscores the importance of positive emotional experiences in the workplace. Feeling part of a supportive community ("Ei jää yksin, on tukea ja turvaa") was mentioned by many.

Table 2: Functional, social and emotional needs of the survey respondents

3.2.4 Ideation

In the context of service design, ideation is a critical phase that involves generating a broad range of ideas and potential solutions to address the needs and pain points identified during earlier stages of the design process. This phase is essential as it fosters creativity and innovation, enabling designers to explore diverse possibilities before narrowing down to the most viable options. Ideation techniques such as brainstorming, mind mapping, and co-creation workshops with stakeholders are commonly employed to stimulate divergent thinking and encourage the exploration of unconventional ideas. The success of ideation in service design is often linked to the diversity of perspectives and the collaborative nature of the process, which can lead to more user-centered and effective service solutions. Research suggests that structured ideation methods, combined with a deep understanding of user needs and context, significantly enhance the potential for innovative outcomes in service design (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Brown & Wyatt, 2010). Furthermore, the iterative nature of ideation, where ideas are continually refined and tested, aligns closely with the principles of design thinking, underscoring the importance of flexibility and user feedback in developing effective services.

In the first online workshop of this project, in an effort to inspire free thinking around the project goal, participants were presented with a set of pain points as a starting point for exploration. They were loosely based on survey responses but more thematic than exact. The participants were encouraged to engage in a free-form ideation exercise, where they were instructed to write down whatever thoughts or ideas came to mind, without filtering or evaluating them. This approach, often referred to as "brainwriting," aimed to foster an environment of open-ended thinking, where participants could freely express their initial reactions and intuitive insights. The structured nature of brainwriting helps reduce the potential for "groupthink," where the desire for harmony or conformity results in fewer unique ideas. Additionally, it mitigates the social pressure that can sometimes stifle creativity in open discussions, fostering a more inclusive environment for idea generation. Research indicates that brainwriting can lead to a higher quantity and diversity of ideas compared to traditional brainstorming sessions, as it allows participants to think more deeply and reflectively before sharing (Lucidspark, n.d.).

As participants shared their ideas, a dynamic discussion emerged, allowing the group to explore potential next steps. This method not only facilitated the generation of diverse ideas but also helped in identifying patterns and juxtapositions among participants' contributions, thereby providing a good foundation for the subsequent stages of the design process. The workshop's emphasis on uninhibited idea generation aligns with principles of design thinking, which prioritize creativity, user-centricity, and iterative development in problem-solving contexts (Liedtka & Ogilvie, 2011).

As can be seen in Figure 15, some inherent tensions were revealed, as well as first ideas of how to navigate building a community that offers a sustainable community model for independent professionals.

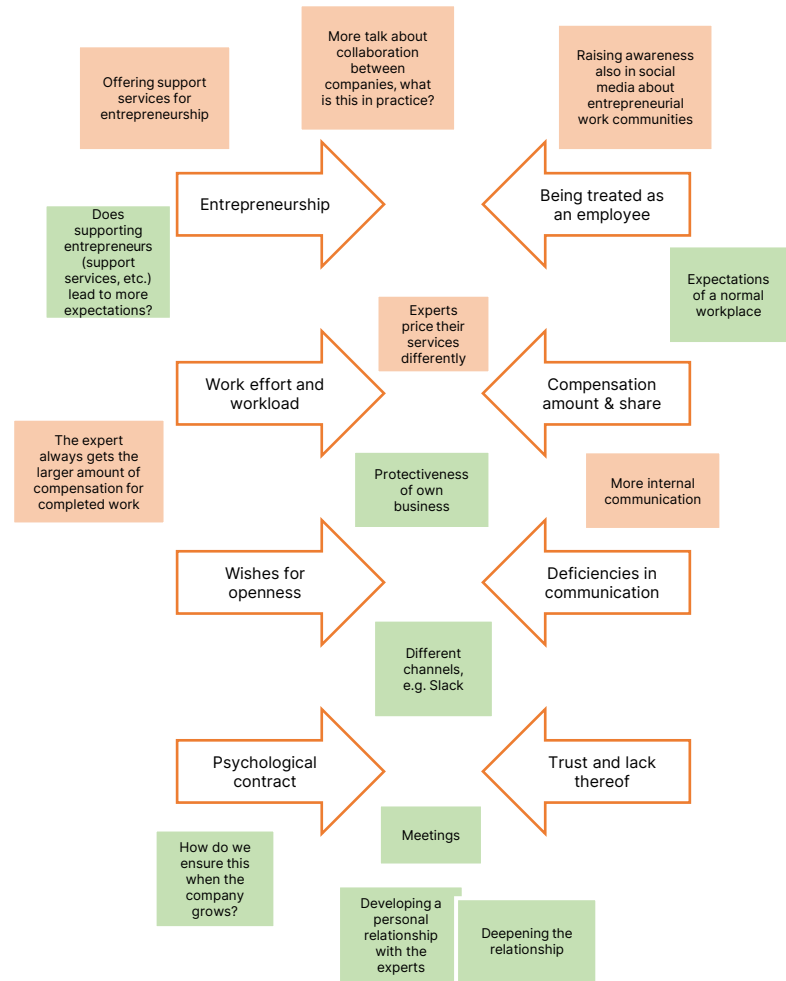


Figure 15: First ideation session around pain points of the survey respondents

3.2.5 Personas

As the discussion continued around the needs and pain points of professionals, it became clear that not all of them need or value the same things. To help the commissioner empathize with the needs, motivations, and pain points of different types of professionals, personas were developed. The initial drafts were put together by the author of this thesis and then presented to the commissioner team for discussion and development at the in-person workshop in January 2024. The profiles were then adjusted based on anecdotes and real-world interactions with professionals, brought to the discussion by the commissioner team.

Based on the responses to the survey, it became clear that there are at least three different types of expert profiles in entrepreneurial communities like WLM. These personas were also recognized by the participants, based on previous experiences. Similar to the method used by Davidson et al. (2023), a typology was created to illustrate the attributes and needs of different types of independent contractors. The personas discussed are shown and described on the following pages.



Figure 16: Professional Persona 1

Professional Persona 1

Mia

The professional persona depicted on the left represents Mia, an experienced trainer and consultant with a background in psychology. She expresses a clear preference for someone to undertake the sales aspect of her services, which would enable her to concentrate on service delivery. Pricing and support are her top priorities. Her likes include simple and fair pricing models, ease of communication, and the potential to expand her client base. Conversely, Mia dislikes the hassles associated with sales activities, scheduling issues, and the necessity of price negotiations.

A service offering tailored for Mia would largely automate or outsource non-core activities, particularly sales and administrative tasks, while providing robust support and opportunities for professional engagement and growth. This would allow her to concentrate on her primary role as a trainer and consultant, with a strong foundation in place for managing the business aspects of her profession.



Figure 17: Professional Persona 2

Professional Persona 2

Tom

The professional persona outlined here is that of Tom, who operates as a work counselor with expertise in human resources and experience as an in-house coach. Tom expresses a strong desire to be integrated into a community of like-minded professionals. His needs are balanced around the requirements for ease, pricing, support, and community, with the latter two appearing most prominently. Tom enjoys learning from others, attending community events, and collaborating on client projects, indicating a preference for a collective and interactive work environment. On the contrary, Tom has an aversion to working in isolation and dislikes the task of seeking out new clients.

This information suggests that Tom thrives in a collaborative setting and benefits from a structured support system that fosters professional connections and minimizes his involvement in solo client acquisition efforts.

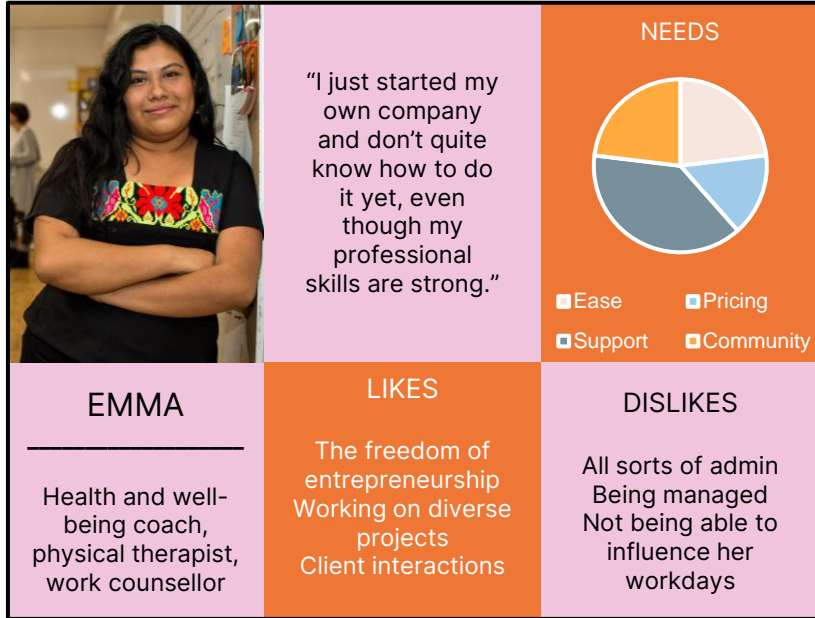


Figure 18: Professional Persona 3

Professional Persona 3

Emma

Emma is a multifaceted professional, operating as a health and wellbeing coach, physical therapist, and work counselor, who has recently embarked on founding her own company. Despite her strong professional capabilities, she acknowledges a gap in her knowledge regarding the intricacies of running a business. Her stated needs indicate a significant demand for support and community, followed by ease and pricing considerations. Emma prefers the autonomy associated with entrepreneurship, the variety of working on different projects, and direct client interaction. However, she has a strong aversion to administrative tasks, constraints on her autonomy, and limitations on her ability to influence her workdays.

The elements above suggest that any service offering for Emma should minimize administrative burdens, foster a supportive community, and allow flexibility in her professional practice.

3.2.6 Anthropomorphizing as a prototype

Organizational identity theory, situated within the domain of organizational studies, interrogates the fundamental inquiry of "Who are we as an organization?" This theoretical framework was initially articulated by Albert and Whetten (1985). Contemporary perspectives suggest that a holistic and integrated organizational identity encompasses three core elements: purpose, values, and culture, as identified by McKinsey (2021). Ashforth et al. (2020) introduce the concept of anthropomorphism—the endowment of human characteristics or behaviors to non-human entities, objects, or events—as pivotal for organizations. This approach facilitates organizational members' understanding of their entity in terms of "who it is/who we are as an organization" (for instance, personality, attitudes, emotions) as opposed to "what it is/what we are" (for example, industry classification, structural attributes, organizational age). The researchers argue that anthropomorphizing an organization, thereby envisioning it as person-like, encourages the emergence of interpersonal emotions and behaviors. This personification also enhances social, relational, and personal identification with the organization, thereby establishing a psychological contract that is linked to heightened organizational commitment.

Considering its benefits, anthropomorphizing can serve as a potent prototype in the formation of organizational identity. This approach enables the conceptualization and development of organizational identities that resonate on a personal and emotional level with both internal stakeholders (e.g., employees) and external stakeholders (e.g., customers, partners) (Guido, 2019). This process involves creating a persona or personas that embody the organization's identity. These personas make the organization more relatable and understandable to stakeholders, facilitating a deeper emotional connection. For instance, an organization might be personified as a nurturer, innovator, or leader, depending on its core values and goals. One possible framework to use is the Brand Archetype categorization, as summarized by Maidment (2021). Brand archetypes, rooted in the Jungian theory of universal, symbolic patterns, play a crucial role in branding by aligning a brand's identity with fundamental human motivations and emotions. These archetypes serve as a framework for shaping a brand's personality and narrative, making it more relatable and memorable to consumers (van Prooijen & Bartels, 2019).

By leveraging these archetypal identities, brands can create a consistent and compelling story that resonates on a deeper emotional level, fostering a stronger connection with their target audience. For instance, a brand embodying the Hero archetype might focus on themes of courage, resilience, and triumph over adversity, appealing to stakeholders who identify with or aspire to these values. This strategic use of archetypes helps in differentiating the brand in a crowded marketplace, ensuring a coherent brand message across various marketing channels, and building long-term loyalty among valued stakeholders. In an extensive review article of numerous studies in this area, Ghorbani et al. (2022) summarize that digital brand personality (BP) perceptions have, identifying significant effects on cognitive, affective/relational, and conative responses, as well as on brand equity. Affective and relational outcomes, such as increased brand trust, attachment, love, and loyalty, underscore the emotional bond fostered by a strong digital BP. Conative outcomes highlight enhanced social media engagement, including higher levels of likes, shares, comments, and word-of-mouth communication, alongside a positive influence on purchase intentions. Cognitive outcomes, while less explored, reveal positive effects on perceived quality and website involvement.

As a form of prototype, anthropomorphizing also allows organizations to test and refine their identity concepts before fully integrating them into their culture and external image. By exploring different personas and characteristics, an organization can determine which aspects resonate most with its members and stakeholders, and adjust its identity accordingly (Ghorbani et al., 2022).

As a pre-task for the participants of the 2nd workshop, they were asked to think about the following question:

"If We Love Mondays were a person, who would it be and how would you describe that person?"

A photograph of Mick Jagger performing on stage. He is wearing a dark, sequined jacket over a purple shirt. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and pointing his left hand towards the right. The background is dark with some bokeh light effects.

The CEO responded with:

“If We Love Mondays (our new brand) were personified, it would be Mick Jagger, who at 80 years old still rocks his job with full energy, takes great care of himself both physically and mentally, and enjoys life to the fullest. And of course, he parties until morning at his 80th birthday bash in a nightclub. With age and experience come solid professional skills and expertise that is evident in our work and outcomes. We are like the Rolling Stones’ new album—solid expertise and professional skill, with a great vibe and passion for the work we do.”

(Hopia, 2023)

(Picture: Kimura, 2023; SiriusXM, 2023)

To further develop the concept towards a brand identity, during the workshop, the mission and vision of WLM as Mick Jagger were formulated as follows:

Mission	Vision
<p>WLM's reason for being</p> <p>Passing on solid know-how while shaking up old-school ways of working with some fresh perspectives.</p>	<p>WLM's goals in life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FREEDOM • Taking care of themselves and others • Breaking stereotypes and stigmas • Doing exceptionally good work with strong expertise • Finding the right spot for everyone, utilizing each type of knowledge where it is most useful • Creating a collaboration-focused community

Table 3: WLM's mission and vision

AI was then utilized to reformulate the vision of the company based on these thoughts, resulting in the following output:

"A visionary entity that champions freedom, nurtures growth, defies conventions, and excels with mastery. It's a beacon for individual potential, harnessing diverse knowledge for the greater good, and fostering communities united by collaboration." (ChatGPT, 2023)

Going back to the concept of Brand archetypes, the workshop participants then discussed the Brand Archetypes as described in a blog post by Rizzo DC (2024). After the discussion, consensus was reached that the brand identity of WLM is a combination of the Creator, the Explorer, the Jester, the Magician, and the Sage.

According to an overview by Houraghan (2024), these archetypes come with some of the following characteristics: The Creator exhibits creative spirit and innovation, and a desire to create something new and exceptional, that wasn't previously there. There is a fear of stagnation. The Explorer is adventurous, going outside the comfort zone, takes on challenges and fears confinement.



Figure 19: Illustration of WLM's brand identity. Image generated using the prompt "An 80-year-old rock star full of energy, showcasing solid professional skills and expertise. Her presence exudes the essence of the magician, sage, and explorer archetypes. The background is a vibrant concert stage with colorful lights and an enthusiastic audience. No words in the image." by OpenAI, DALL-E, 2024

The Jester brings a joyous and uplifting essence, optimism about the future and a fear of boredom. The Magician contributes a transformative power and a curious mind that helps avoid ignorance, and together with the wisdom and guidance of the Sage, helps with sharing accurate professional knowledge with clients. According to the workshop participants, these archetypes collectively reflect the brand's mission to build a vibrant, passionate, and supportive community for entrepreneurs and a source of cutting-edge knowledge for its clients.

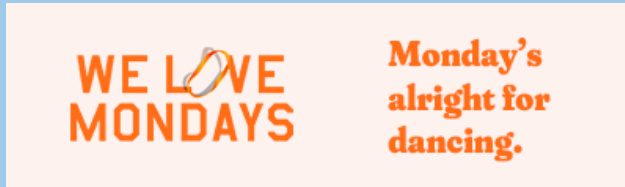


Figure 20: An example of WLM's brand imagery (WLM, 2024)

3.2.7 Value mapping

A values statement describes the core principles and beliefs that guide the organization's behavior. It should be authentic and reflect the organization's culture and identity. Values should also be used to guide decision-making and to ensure that the organization remains aligned with its mission and vision. Company values help in navigating complex ethical situations, ensuring consistency and integrity in business practices, which is essential for maintaining trust with stakeholders (Harvard Business Review, 2015)

As a key part of this project was to work on building the best possible culture and value compass for WLM, the next step in the workshop was to dig deeper into what values could act as a compass for building the kind of company culture that

is wanted by independent professionals AND

corresponds to who WLM wants to be as a company

First, the participants wrote down some values independently. In the next phase, thoughts were collected on a whiteboard (part of which can be seen on the right).

Through a discussion, the following four values were chosen:

Vapaus – freedom, tuki – support, reiluus – fairness, avoimuus – openness

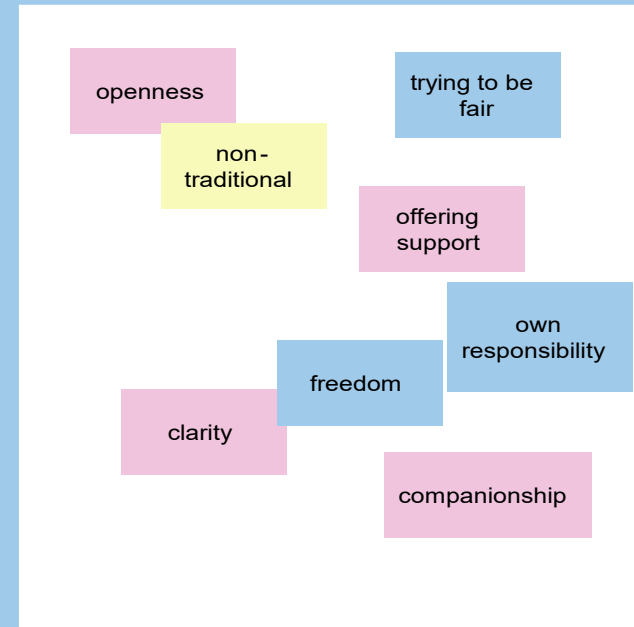


Figure 21: Ideation around values, workshop output

3.3 Bridge – *Are we doing this right?*

Transitioning to "The Bridge" phase, the Design Odyssey by Ryan Ford (2022) introduces the metaphorical challenges akin to crossing a bridge, symbolizing the hurdles and evaluations encountered en route to realizing a successful project. This stage involves critical scrutiny of the work accomplished thus far, through design critiques or stakeholder feedback, and the negotiation of expectations or new requirements. Key elements such as the revisitation of project aspects underscore the dialogical process of refinement and alignment with broader project goals. The question "Are we doing this right?" describes the introspective and evaluative nature of this phase.

3.3.1 Content analysis

As the interview content analysis progressed, the data collected served as a good backdrop for checking back on ideas created in the exploration phase. In this project, it was not feasible to invite stakeholders to numerous co-creation workshops, which made survey and interview data even more valuable. The interviews provide rich, detailed information that can be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights that inform the design process. For instance, thematic analysis enables the extraction and interpretation of key themes from the interview transcripts, offering a nuanced understanding of stakeholders' perspectives (Hecker & Kalpokas, n.d.).

In this phase, a deeper qualitative analysis of the interviews was conducted. Using Attride & Stirling's (2001) Thematic Networks methodology, the needs and motivations of independent professionals were further explored. This analytical model is used in qualitative research to organize, analyze, and present themes or patterns found within a data set. This model is often used in psychology and other social sciences to interpret qualitative data like interview transcripts or textual responses. Themes and patterns were identified in the data and coded with descriptive codes that represent different topics, ideas, or concepts. These codes were then grouped into broader themes, refined and defined during the process. In the first phase, the transcripts were read to identify initial codes depicting topics discussed by the interviewees. In this way, 191 codes were identified, including codes such as "possibility to learn new things" and "lack of autonomy". Going through the codes, seven basic themes appeared to emerge. In the table to the right, they are listed together with a description and an illustrative quote from one of the interviews, freely translated from Finnish by the author.

Theme name	Description	Illustrative quote
Collaboration	Codes related to collaborating within the entrepreneurial community and wishes for the community, such as "ability to help out and be helped"	<i>"It is kind of a double-edged sword, how much you want to contribute yourself. I'd like to also gain something, like learning new things, new perspectives, new important contacts, something that would also serve me."</i>
	54 codes	
Task management	Codes related to assigning work or administrative functions, such as "assignments"	<i>"Since it seems to work well that they find clients and they keep coming, I in turn am willing to tolerate that the assignments don't always come to me as a neatly built package."</i>
	21 codes	
Partnership	Codes related to the relationship between the entrepreneur and the community builder company, such as "being treated as an employee"	<i>"What they ultimately actually wanted from me, why I was asked to join, what they expected from me, is still a bit unclear, because what it was didn't quite seem like what they promised, in my experience."</i>
	70 codes	
Ethical and value considerations	Codes related to ethics and values, such as "ethical conflict"	<i>"The message and how it is marketed and where, a kind of match of values, is something that has influenced that I have stayed with this one community, it has felt like I can do things more the way I like to do them."</i>
	14 codes	
Reasons for joining and leaving	Codes related to why entrepreneurs have, or would have, joined or left a community, such as "possibility to learn new things"	<i>"To meet colleagues, having a chance to talk to people who are interested in similar things."</i>
	24 codes	
Customer relationship	Codes related to customers or branding, such as "branded slide deck" or "assigned customer accounts"	<i>"Being able to join earlier, because it's motivating to be able to do your job well when you understand what the customer is feeling. If you meet them early you can do your job better and be able to meet their needs better."</i>
	37 codes	
Leadership	Codes related to explicit mentions of leadership activities within the community, such as "feedback to community leader"	<i>"Leadership, just like in many other contexts, but especially here, is like a job that serves the community."</i>
	9 codes	

Table 4: Themes found in the interview data, codes and illustrative quotes

Some codes were included in two or more basic themes. For example, “communication channels” was included in both Partnership and Collaboration to capture any relevant content in the analysis of both basic themes.

In the next phase of the analysis, the basic themes were analyzed further based on the codes themselves, as well as the snippets of text associated with them. Organizing themes group these basic themes into broader conceptual categories that reflect overarching insights or principles. The goal was to identify patterns or relationships between the basic themes that can inform higher-level understandings of the data set. In this way, three organizing themes were identified:

Community dynamics

This organizing theme encompasses both *collaboration*, *partnership*, and *reasons for joining and leaving* highlighting the importance of interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and effective communication within and outside the community. It highlights the social and interpersonal aspects of being part of a business community, including the benefits and challenges of these interactions.

Operational and administrative aspects

Task management and *customer relationship* fall under this organizing theme, which focuses on the practical and administrative elements of managing and participating in an entrepreneurial community. It includes task management, the distribution of assignments, and the relationships with customers. This theme addresses the logistical and functional aspects that are crucial for the day-to-day operations and the success of the entrepreneurial ventures within the community.

Ethical and leadership considerations

Ethical and value considerations together with *leadership* form this theme, which explores the ethical values and leadership dynamics within the entrepreneurial community. It looks at the moral principles guiding the community members and the role of leadership in fostering a supportive and ethical environment. This theme is concerned with how values and leadership practices influence the community's culture and the individual experiences of its members.



Figure 22: Schematic of the basic and organizing themes

3.3.2 Letting the personas speak

To check whether the ideas presented in the Exploration phase were on the right track, the focus was again shifted to the personas created based on the survey data. In a workshop session, the participants focused on imagining what each persona would appreciate from WLM, and why that would be. The questions posed for each persona were the following:

What would this persona appreciate most as a way to avoid the things they dislike the most?

What would this persona appreciate most as a way to add more of the things they like into their professional life?

For each of these things, how might we make the wishes reality?

The results of the discussion are presented below, based on notes made by the author of this thesis, first translated from Finnish into English and then written out in a practical, business-centric format. An example:

Mia's wish: To have someone else sell her services

Ideation (*how might we fulfil this wish?*):

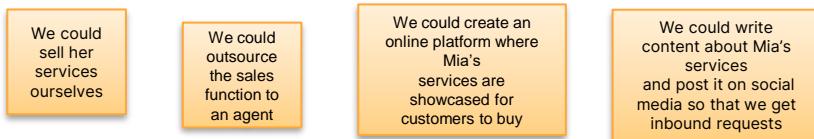


Figure 23: Ideation around persona needs, workshop output

Once each topic had at least three different ideas, each of them was discussed in terms of feasibility (how easy/difficult would it be to do this) and fit for the persona (how well would this respond to the persona's needs). In Mia's case, it was discussed that the services she provides are mostly too complex for direct sales, as they require problem scoping and analysis from initial contact. Thus, for her, a dedicated sales function or agency would be the most helpful approach.

In this way, each pain point or wish of each persona was discussed. The next pages illustrate the main points discovered for each persona. This discussion also incorporated the initial ideation which was done around the first findings from the survey results, as presented in chapter 3.2.1.



Sales and client acquisition: Given Mia's desire to have someone sell her services, a dedicated sales function or partnership with a sales agency could be included. This team would ensure that Mia can focus solely on delivering her services.

Transparent pricing structure: Mia appreciates simple and fair pricing models. The service should, therefore, feature a transparent, straightforward pricing strategy, possibly with tiered options that cater to different client needs without requiring negotiation.

Efficient scheduling system: To address Mia's dislike for scheduling issues, an automated scheduling system that clients can use to book her services would be beneficial. This system should be user-friendly and capable of handling rescheduling and cancellations to minimize Mia's involvement in such processes.

Communication channels: Since Mia values ease of communication, the service should include a streamlined communication system, such as a customer relationship management (CRM) tool.

Support services: Reflecting her need for ease, the service offering should provide administrative and technical support, thus relieving Mia of these duties.

Community engagement: A platform or forum for Mia to engage with a wider community could be included to satisfy her desire for a broader client base. This might be an online community or networking events that allow her to share her expertise and expand her reach.

Professional development: Mia values opportunities for professional growth. The service could include access to ongoing training and development resources.

In summary, a service offering tailored for Mia would largely automate or outsource non-core activities, particularly sales and administrative tasks, while providing robust support and opportunities for professional engagement and growth.



TOM

Work counsellor,
experience in HR
and in-house
coaching

Community platform: A membership to a professional network that focuses on his field could provide a robust community of like-minded individuals. This could include access to an online platform with forums, discussion groups, and networking opportunities.

Co-working spaces: Offering access to co-working spaces would encourage collaboration and provide a social work environment, helping to mitigate his dislike for working alone.

Client referral program: To address his dislike for seeking new clients, a client referral program that leverages the community network could be beneficial. This would allow Tom to gain new clients through referrals within the community, reducing the need for direct marketing or cold outreach.

Collaborative projects: Initiatives or systems that facilitate or encourage working on projects with other professionals, such as a project-sharing board or a match-making service for joint ventures.

Event access: Free or discounted access to workshops, seminars, and other community events within his field would satisfy his enjoyment of learning from others and staying engaged with the community.

Shared experience forums: Regularly scheduled meetups or group coaching sessions where professionals can share their experiences, challenges, and insights.

Support services: Administrative and back-office support services to handle scheduling, billing, and other routine tasks, allowing Tom to focus on his client-facing work and community interaction.

By integrating these elements, Tom would be provided with a service offering that aligns with his collaborative nature, fulfills his need for community, and minimizes the need to work alone or deal with too much client acquisition.



EMMA

Health and well-
being coach,
physical therapist,
work counsellor

Business management support: Since Emma has just started her company and does not like admin work, a service that offers business management support would be essential. This could include bookkeeping, appointment scheduling, client management systems, and administrative task handling.

Entrepreneurial community access: Emma values community and networking. Providing her with membership in a business network or a mastermind group specifically for entrepreneurs in the health and wellness sector can fulfill this need, allowing her to share insights and gain advice from peers.

Flexible work environment solutions: To ensure that Emma has influence over her workdays, the service offering could include tools and systems that allow for a flexible work environment, like cloud-based software that lets her work from anywhere.

Project collaboration opportunities: Since she enjoys working on diverse projects, a platform where she can collaborate with other professionals on joint ventures or client projects could be useful.

Business coaching and mentorship: Given Emma's acknowledgment of not fully knowing how to run a business, access to coaching or mentorship programs can help bridge this gap.

Professional development workshops: Regularly offered workshops or courses in entrepreneurship and business management tailored to health and wellness professionals would help her strengthen her business skills.

Regulatory and compliance assistance: Since Emma's fields may involve navigating various regulations, a service that helps keep her informed and compliant with laws and industry standards would be beneficial.

Subscription model: A simple and fair subscription model for payment for these services would likely appeal to her desire for straightforward pricing structures.

This service package would be designed to allow Emma to focus on her professional expertise and client interactions, while taking care of the administrative tasks and supporting her business growth.

3.4 Construction – *How can we push ahead, together?*

In the "Construction" phase of the Design Odyssey, the focus shifts to the actualization of ideas into tangible outcomes, marking a phase of concretization where collaboration becomes paramount. Here, the dialogue extends the people who can make the ideas reality, as the project transitions from ideation to implementation, still embracing a spirit of play to explore the full potential of the design. This phase is guided by the inquiry, "How can we push ahead together?" emphasizing the collective effort and synergy required to bring the ideas to fruition.

3.4.1 Culture shift

A culture shift is crucial for a company aiming to rebrand itself as it aligns the internal values and behaviors with the new brand identity. This transformation fosters stakeholder engagement and helps ensure that the community embodies the desired brand attributes, enhancing authenticity and coherence. It can also help in attracting and retaining talent that resonates with the new vision, creating a competitive advantage. Moreover, a well-managed cultural shift can improve customer perception and loyalty, as the company's external messaging and internal practices become consistent and credible.

Culture shift exercise

In an effort to tie together the value work done earlier in the project, a culture shift exercise was done during the second workshop. The exercise used is an adaptation of the Culture Reset Canvas, designed by Gustavo Razzetti (Razzetti, 2022). This tool is designed to help companies reevaluate their cultural practices. This framework encourages organizations to reflect on past traditions, identify beneficial elements to retain, and envision future cultural changes that align with new working realities. This iterative process aims to foster continuous improvement and resilience in corporate culture.

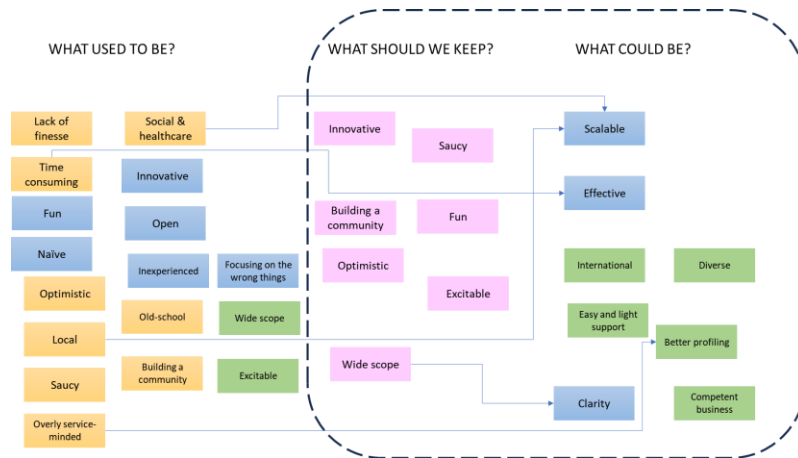


Figure 24: Translated workshop output from the culture shift exercise

As can be seen in Figure 24, the workshop output of the culture shift exercise indicates a shift from a state characterized by limitations such as lack of finesse, time-consuming processes, and a naive, overly service-minded approach. However, from the old way of doing things, WLM aims to retain elements such as being fun, innovative, open, optimistic, while building a community and having a wide scope of services. These attributes are seen as positive aspects of their existing culture that can be integrated into their new cultural framework while evolving other aspects to meet new goals and challenges. The shift aims to cultivate a more innovative, scalable, and effective culture that supports a fun and excitable work environment. The company seeks to become more international, diverse, and clear in its mission, ensuring better profiling and competency. This new culture emphasizes building a community, maintaining optimism, and providing easy and light support, thereby enhancing overall organizational effectiveness and clarity.

Leadership building

As one of the goals of this project was to develop leadership in an entrepreneurial community, a key component of this is building a leadership model to match the new brand identity.

Leadership introspection is crucial for a culture shift as it enables leaders to critically evaluate their values, beliefs, and behaviors in the context of the desired cultural changes. By regularly reflecting on their actions and decisions, leaders can continuously improve their skills and adapt to new challenges, ultimately driving successful cultural shifts within their organizations (Han, 2023). By reflecting on their own leadership styles and practices, leaders can identify areas for personal growth and alignment with the new culture. This self-awareness fosters authenticity, ensuring leaders can genuinely model the new cultural values.

Leadership reflection exercise

Figure 25 shows the translated output of a leadership reflection exercise conducted during the second workshop. It is an exercise developed based on the practical experience of the author, not attributable to any specific source. In the first phase, the participants K and S, the leaders of We Love Mondays, were asked to individually answer the following questions:

- On the vertical axis, estimate what kind of environment works best for you in terms of how structured it is. Do you prefer a chaotic, ad-hoc environment, or a more structured one?
- On the horizontal axis, estimate how you like to work. Do you require autonomy or freedom, or do you prefer more guidance and external control?

The participants then placed their first initial on the board and their choices were discussed.

Next, the attention shifted to the company being built. The questions on the board guided the participants to think about what kind of elements of leadership they want to provide for the members of the community they are building. The results can be seen in the picture.

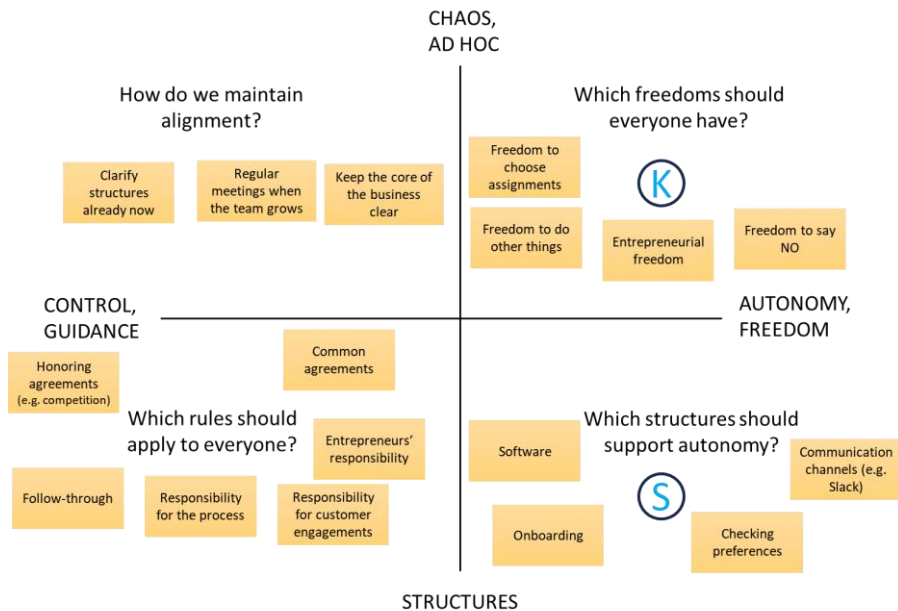


Figure 25: Translated workshop output from the leadership reflection exercise

3.4.2 Applicable leadership paradigms

As the members of entrepreneurial communities are, as the name suggests, entrepreneurs and not employees, it is important to pay attention to this distinction when suggesting leadership models for this type of organization. For this reason, for the context of the commissioner, three possible frameworks will be examined in more detail: Transformational Leadership, Minimum Viable Leadership, and Agile Leadership.

Transformational leadership

As mentioned, the literature on leadership in communities of independent professionals is underdeveloped. However, there is some evidence that transformational leadership has been found to have a positive correlation with freelancer sharing behaviors. There is a direct relationship with both knowledge collecting and knowledge sharing, as well as employee engagement. In addition, social support mediates a relationship between engagement and knowledge sharing behaviors. On the other hand, when social support is lacking, freelancers will be less inclined to ask for information or seek help or offer it to others (Yadav et al., 2019). In this context, transformational leadership was described as leadership where emphasis is placed recognizing people's emotions, their need to grow and develop, as well as individual attention to each person's uniqueness and developmental phase.

Minimum Viable Leadership

Minimum viable leadership (MVL) is a conceptual framework that posits a minimalist approach to organizational leadership, aiming to identify the least amount of leadership intervention required to achieve maximum effectiveness in team performance and organizational outcomes (Amaxxa LLC, 2024). This approach contrasts with more traditional, intensive leadership models, emphasizing the empowerment of team members through autonomy, self-organization, and decentralized decision-making processes. According to a Google Scholar search conducted on March 31st, 2024, there is virtually no academic literature focusing on this topic. The only article found is by Dimare & Sorensen (2019), where the authors describe a "Fire and Shield" type of leadership, where creating drive is balanced with creating a sense of psychological safety. However, the lack of academic studies using this specific terminology does not mean that the content of the framework is without its uses.

Several key components of MVL are summarized various ways by writers of contemporary leadership narratives (for example: Amaxxa LLC, 2024; Carmody, 2015; Kramp 2014). The concept of minimum viable leadership has its roots in the lean startup methodology, particularly the idea of the minimum viable product (MVP) - a product with just enough features to satisfy early customers and provide feedback for future product development (Ries, 2011). Analogously, MVL seeks to apply this principle to leadership by determining the minimal conditions necessary for teams to function effectively without extensive direct oversight or intervention. The MVL model is predicated on the belief that over-leadership can stifle creativity, hinder employee engagement, and lead to dependency, while a minimal approach can foster a more agile, responsive, and innovative organizational culture.

Agile Leadership

Closely related principles can be found within the framework of agile leadership. Agile leadership is underpinned by the core principles of adaptability, empowerment, collaboration, and continuous learning (Mogens Ejby Villadsen, 2023). In their essence, agile methodologies are iterative and incremental approaches to project management and software development, emphasizing flexibility, collaboration, and customer feedback to adapt to changing requirements throughout the development process (Beck et al., 2001). To highlight the current directions in research, in their conference paper titled "Conceptualizing the Agile Work Organization: A Systematic Literature Review Framework and Research Agenda," Greineder & Leicht (2020) undertake a systematic literature review to clarify the concept of Agile Work Organization (AO) across various research domains. The study highlights a significant gap in a unified conceptualization within the literature and the authors propose a novel framework based on their findings, emphasizing three core dimensions of AO: Strategic Agility, Functional Agility, and Operational Agility. Strategic Agility, which focuses on an organization's capability to sense and respond to changes swiftly; Functional Agility, which concerns the alignment of knowledge and resources to bridge strategic orientation with operational execution; and Operational Agility, which involves optimizing team dynamics and work environments for rapid, customer-centric product delivery. These dimensions are posited to collectively enhance an organization's adaptability and flexibility in dynamic environments.

In another recent conference paper, Geffers et al. (2024) explore the core characteristics of Agile Leadership (AL) within the context of today's dynamic organizations. The study identifies five key perspectives of AL: person-based, purpose-based, result-based, position-based, and process-based agile leadership. Person-based Agile Leadership underscores the intrinsic qualities of agile leaders, highlighting their humility, adaptability, visionary capacity, and engagement. These leaders are characterized by their openness to learning from others, flexibility in the face of change, ability to align and inspire their teams with a clear vision, and commitment to active engagement in their roles. Purpose-based Agile Leadership delves into the motives behind agile leadership practices. It highlights the significance of AL in fostering an environment conducive to rapid adaptation, employee development, product centricity, and increased organizational competitiveness. Result-based Agile Leadership focuses on the outcomes achieved through AL, such as creating a shared vision, cultivating a learning organization, enhancing transparency, and fostering decision-making within teams. These results align employees, promote autonomy, and enable self-organized teams with end-to-end responsibility. Position-based Agile Leadership examines the roles within the organization where AL is practiced. It finds that AL is not confined to senior executives alone but is also adopted by agile accountabilities without managerial authority, thereby enabling a broader implementation of agile practices across various organizational levels.

Process-based Agile Leadership details the methodologies agile leaders employ to accomplish objectives. It categorizes agile leaders into five roles: resilient leaders, experimenters, enablers, collaborators, and facilitators. Each role contributes uniquely to fostering an agile mindset, promoting innovation, encouraging employee empowerment, facilitating collaboration, and ensuring effective process management (Geffers et al., 2024).

For the context of entrepreneurial communities, especially the aspects of Position-based and Process-based Agile Leadership seem relevant. Position-based agile leadership encourages leadership at all levels, including non-managerial roles, supports a culture of empowerment and initiative-taking. In a community of entrepreneurs, this approach can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, driving proactive problem-solving and innovation. Process-based agile leadership, on the other hand, can support the role of leaders as facilitators, helping to streamline processes, making the organization more efficient and responsive. In addition, emphasizing collaboration within the community and with clients can lead to more innovative and client-centered service offerings. Collaboration also enables knowledge sharing and synergies among entrepreneurs with diverse expertise.

Summary of the Agile Leadership (AL) conceptualization	
Characteristics of the Agile Leader	Humble, adaptable, visionary, Engaged
Purpose of Agile Leadership	Implementation of agility at the organizational level and thus increasing the speed of reaction to change
Key Results of AL	Alignment through a clear vision, learning organization, transparency, decision-making in teams
Practitioners of AL	At all levels of the organization, practiced by executives, agile accountabilities and within teams
Roles of the Agile Leader	Resilient leader, experimenter, enabler, collaborator, facilitator

Table 5: Summary of Agile Leadership principles (Geffers et al., 2024)

3.4.3 Minimum Viable Leadership for We Love Mondays (MVL for WLM)

Leadership of entrepreneurial communities is, in essence, a service provided to the members of the community. It is therefore reasonable to start building it by first listening to the voices of people with lived experience in these communities. Question 13 of the survey sheds some light on these wishes.

Question 13: Which aspects have you perceived as positive when being part of entrepreneurial communities? ?

Analyzing the open-ended answers given to the questions, five key themes were identified. They are listed below, together with an illustrative quote from the responses, translated from Finnish by the author.

Transparency and Authenticity	Appreciation of Entrepreneurial Contributions	Clear Direction and Vision	Project Management	Equitable Treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents value openness and genuine interactions within the leadership. • "Radical transparency, focusing on the entrepreneurs and supporting them in making the clients happy." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a call for greater recognition and respect for the contributions that each entrepreneur makes. • "Being valued as an entrepreneur and planning things as equals." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is expected to provide a well-defined path and vision, along with clear rules of engagement, facilitating a coherent and unified approach. • "Clear direction and vision, clear rules of engagement for the work." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of project management skills to ensure the network's effectiveness and reliability. • "I don't know if I really want traditional leadership, more like a project manager." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders are expected to avoid treating members as traditional employees, instead respecting their autonomy. • "Openness, not treating me like an employee."

Figure 26: Five main themes of wishes for leadership by members of entrepreneurial communities

WLM aims to be a nimble and flexible organization, while still providing adequate support to the independent professionals and responding to their needs. For this reason, the author and the core team continued the discussion about how to structure leadership in such a way that it balances both aspects. Based on these conversations, it was agreed that Minimum Viable Leadership, aligned with the needs expressed in Figure 26, would center on fostering a culture of transparency, authenticity, and mutual respect. Open, genuine interactions that prioritize the entrepreneurs' contributions and autonomy should always be valued. Radical transparency, where the focus shifts towards empowering entrepreneurs to excel in client relationships, is a central tenet. Emphasizing and valuing everyone's entrepreneurial input underscores the importance of treating all contributors as equals, planning collaboratively, and creating an inclusive environment where each participant's role is clearly recognized and appreciated.

Simultaneously, adequate leadership would necessitate providing clear direction and vision to align the team's efforts cohesively. This includes defining a unified approach through well-established rules of engagement and maintaining a coherent strategic path. The leadership style will avoid traditional hierarchical models and instead be more akin to project management, emphasizing reliability, project oversight, and operational effectiveness. This approach ensures equitable treatment, focusing on autonomy rather than hierarchical control, thereby respecting the individuality of each entrepreneur rather than adhering to traditional employee-employer dynamics. As depicted previously, the needs of the different professionals vary widely. It is thus necessary to create a wide range of support functions and structures, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.



Figure 27: Illustration of WLM's role in the entrepreneurial community. Image generated by the prompt "scene showing a person actively supporting a group of others, focusing on hands-on help and collaboration. The central figure is guiding, not directing." by OpenAI, DALL-E, 2024

3.5 Conclusion – *What does “done” look like?*

Finally, the "Conclusion" phase confronts the reality of finalizing a project, wrestling with the challenges of completion and the potential need for adaptation. This stage acknowledges that the end of a project might not signify its completion but rather a point of reflection, measurement, and possible redirection. The question, "What does 'done' look like?" prompts a critical reassessment of outcomes, impact, and the continuous cycle of learning and development inherent in the design process.

3.5.1 Defining what needs to be done

The "Definition of Done" (DoD) is a fundamental concept in Agile methodologies, which were discussed in chapter 3.4.2. It establishes a shared understanding among team members about the criteria a product increment must meet to be considered complete. This shared definition ensures that all team members have a consistent view of what constitutes "done," thereby promoting quality, transparency, and efficiency in the development process (Atlassian, n.d.) For this project, DoD is established through setting some overarching goals describing a desired future state, together with some concrete and measurable steps for heading in the right direction.

The initial ideas and pain points identified in the beginning of this project have now served as a backdrop of the development work done over the course of the project. They are naturally connected also to the subsequent development work, which will continue beyond the scope of this project. The exploration phase highlighted key areas such as lack of independence, leadership and trust issues, financial fairness, workload misalignment, and communication problems. These pain points, derived from survey data and thematic interviews, underscore the need for solutions that enhance the autonomy and support for independent professionals while ensuring fair compensation and effective communication channels. Moving forward, the development work must integrate these insights by creating robust support systems, transparent pricing models, and streamlined administrative processes that align with the diverse needs of personas identified. This alignment ensures that the resulting service offerings not only address the pain points but also foster a supportive and collaborative entrepreneurial community, driving both individual and collective growth.

Goals	Definitions of Done
<p>Goal 1 Autonomy and empowerment</p> <p>Independent professionals are granted significant autonomy over their work while ensuring they have access to the resources and support necessary for success. There is an emphasis on providing sales, marketing, and administrative support to allow professionals to focus on their core expertise.</p>	<p>Independent professionals have clear guidelines on their scope of autonomy and the boundaries within which they can make decisions.</p> <p>A platform or system is in place that allows professionals to access resources, tools, and support independently.</p> <p>A feedback mechanism is established where professionals can express their needs for further resources or support, and timely responses are provided.</p> <p>Professionals can choose the level of support they need, combined with a financial model that allows different levels of profit-sharing.</p>
<p>Goal 2 Digital infrastructure</p> <p>Emphasis is on a digital-first approach that does not require physical presence in any given location and professionals can work from whatever location they find most suitable, enabling them to create a good work-life balance.</p>	<p>There are organized communication channels around different themes.</p> <p>There are virtual office spaces for gatherings and events.</p> <p>Sessions are mostly self-organizing and not always led by the community leader.</p> <p>Community members are leveraged to test new services, creating a safe environment for sharing, learning, and mentoring.</p>
<p>Goal 3 Community interaction</p> <p>Efforts should be made to encourage members to initiate communication, moving away from traditional corporate social structures. Onboarding and expectation management are extremely important and will form the basis for the psychological contract and partnership between WLM and the independent professionals.</p>	<p>There is a multi-faceted onboarding process that fosters personal connections within the community.</p> <p>There is a visually engaging application linked to different communication tools.</p> <p>There are onboarding tasks which promote interaction, such as scheduling meetings to meet other professionals on a more personal level.</p>
<p>Goal 4 Operational excellence</p> <p>Efforts should be made to ensure clarity in processes and expectations management.</p>	<p>Contracts are thorough and emphasize mutual commitment.</p> <p>Expectations are explicitly discussed during onboarding and documented with care.</p> <p>Support services are aligned with the needs of professionals and adjusted when necessary.</p> <p>Feedback is collected regularly to ensure satisfaction and alignment of expectations.</p> <p>Onboarding materials are readily available.</p>

Table 6: Goals with definitions of done

4

Conclusions and further directions

4.1 The diagram vs. reality

The journey outlined in this thesis exemplifies the iterative and non-linear nature of the Design Odyssey framework (Figure 28), particularly through the cycles of survey-interview data loops, values-culture shift loops, and the integration of survey questions into leadership design. The survey and interview data collection processes were not isolated steps but rather cyclical engagements that provided continual feedback and refinement of ideas. As initial survey results identified key areas of concern, subsequent interviews were used to delve deeper into these issues, generating richer, more nuanced insights. This looping process allowed for an evolving understanding of stakeholder needs and experiences, ensuring that the solutions remained relevant and user-centered. The arrows throughout the diagram of Figure 29 illustrate the dynamic and non-linear nature of the design process. The interconnected arrows and feedback loops describe how the process flowed in real life and emphasize that design is not a linear progression but an iterative cycle where each phase informs and influences the others. This recursive flow underscores the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the design journey. There could be more arrows if every step was depicted but for clarity, only the most relevant ones are shown.

According to Wynn and Eckert (2017), cyclic flows of influence, such as those in feedback loops, are central to many design processes. They emphasize the importance of feedback in achieving convergence and stability in design solutions while managing uncertainty and emergent outcomes. Responsive feedback loops enable designers to quickly adapt to new insights and unforeseen challenges. This approach is particularly important in complex environments where multiple stakeholders are involved. Viswanath et al. (2019) highlight the value of responsive feedback in enhancing the effectiveness of interventions by continuously building evidence and adapting to dynamic contexts. This adaptive nature of feedback loops ensures that the design remains relevant and effective over time.

In this project, it became evident how interconnected the exploration and construction phases were. Not only did personas influence what types of leadership was going to be built, but through construction of the first ideas of a leadership model, more needs of the personas became evident. Similarly, anthropomorphizing was used at an early stage in the project as a type of prototype, but the ideas were revisited on multiple occasion by asking the questions “Who is WLM if we do this?” and “If we are this, what does that require from us on a practical level?”, and so on.

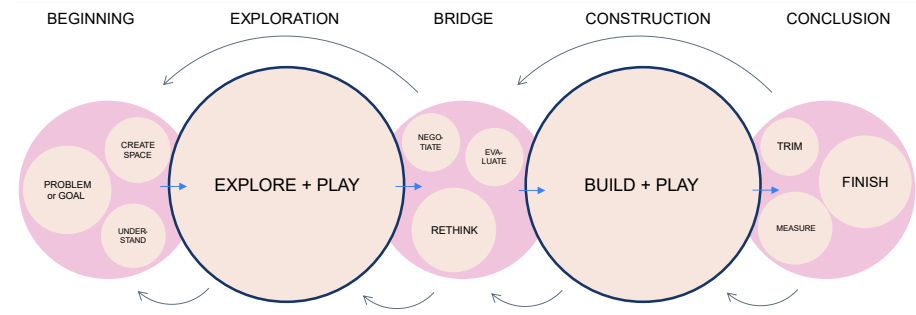


Figure 28: A recreation of the Design Odyssey process depicted in the blog post by Ryan Ford (Ford, 2022)

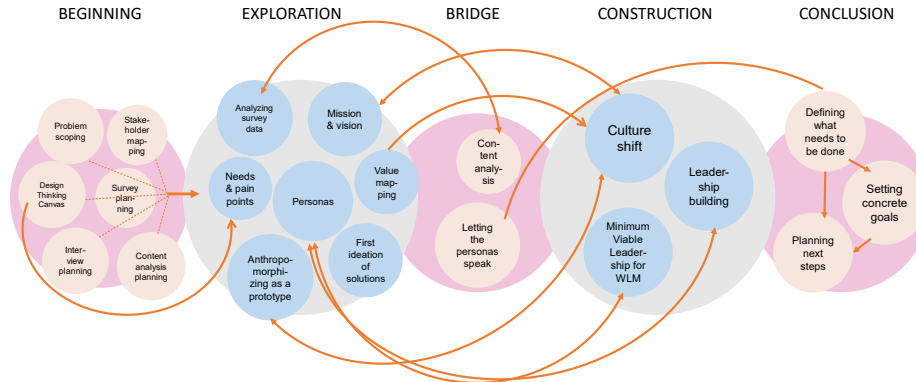


Figure 29: A more truthful representation of the Design Odyssey process

The values-culture shift loop highlighted in the project underscores the dynamic interplay between organizational values and cultural transformation. Initial workshops and surveys revealed foundational values and cultural attributes that were deemed essential by stakeholders. These insights were then used to guide cultural shift exercises, which in turn provided feedback on how well these values were being integrated into the evolving organizational culture. This iterative process ensured that the cultural changes were not only aligned with the stated values but were also adaptable to the emerging needs and contexts of the community. This continuous loop of reflection and adaptation is critical in fostering a resilient and cohesive organizational culture that supports both innovation and stability.

In addition, the triadic relationship between the end clients, WLM, and the independent professionals involves continuous negotiation and adaptation to balance the needs and expectations of all parties. The effectiveness of this model depends on WLM's ability to facilitate open communication, provide equitable support and resources, and foster a collaborative community culture. This dynamic interplay is crucial for sustaining the mutual benefits and growth of the community, as emphasized in the thesis through the Design Odyssey framework and the iterative processes of feedback and adaptation.

Finally, the survey question-leadership design loop demonstrated the importance of using empirical data to shape leadership strategies within entrepreneurial communities. By analyzing survey responses related to leadership preferences and challenges, the project was able to identify key themes and attributes desired in leadership roles. These findings were then incorporated into leadership reflection exercises and the development of a Minimum Viable Leadership (MVL) model, which emphasizes minimal intervention and maximum empowerment. This process not only ensured that the emergent leadership model were grounded in real-world data but will also allow for continuous refinement based on ongoing feedback from community members.

In conclusion, the non-linear and iterative processes described in this thesis highlight the importance of continuous feedback loops and adaptive strategies in design and leadership within entrepreneurial communities. By embracing the principles of the Design Odyssey framework, this project effectively navigated the complexities and unpredictabilities of design work, ensuring that solutions remained responsive to the evolving needs of stakeholders. This approach underscores the value of flexibility, user-centricity, and iterative learning in achieving sustainable and impactful design outcomes.

4.2 Limitations, practical implications and the future

Limitations

This study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size for both the survey and interviews was relatively small and focused primarily on the Finnish market, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions and industries. Additionally, the exploratory nature of the study means that some insights are based on preliminary data and may require further validation through larger, more diverse samples. The reliance on self-reported data could also introduce biases, as participants may have provided socially desirable responses or may not accurately recall past experiences. Finally, the study's scope was confined to highly skilled professionals, excluding other forms of gig work and lower-skilled freelance jobs, which might have different dynamics and challenges. Addressing these limitations in future research would enhance the robustness and applicability of the findings.

Practical implications

The practical implications of this study extend beyond the specific context of a single community builder company, offering valuable insights for a wide range of organizations that facilitate the collaboration of independent professionals. By implementing transparent pricing models, robust administrative support systems, and effective communication tools, community builder organizations across various sectors can enhance the satisfaction and productivity of their members. The iterative, feedback-driven approach advocated by design thinking and frameworks such as the Design Odyssey, which acknowledge the non-linear nature of creating communities, can be universally applied to ensure that solutions remain responsive to the needs of diverse professional communities. Furthermore, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous professional development can lead to a more engaged and loyal network of freelancers, ultimately benefiting clients through higher quality and more consistent service delivery. These strategies can be particularly beneficial in industries experiencing rapid growth in freelance and contract work, such as technology, consulting, and creative services, setting a precedent for best practices in managing and supporting independent professionals on a broader scale.

Next steps

The research questions outlined at the onset of the project were the following:

- What are the needs, pain points and expectations of independent professionals who join an entrepreneurial community, and how are their wishes met?
- What do independent professionals prioritize when joining entrepreneurial communities, and are there different needs within the target group?
- What kind of leadership is needed in entrepreneurial communities of independent professionals?
- How should work be organized in communities of independent professionals?

This thesis has been an exploration into both the answers to those questions, and one community's journey toward becoming what they set out to be, best-in-class in this type of employment form. In the near future, the focus should shift towards implementing and testing the proposed solutions within the entrepreneurial community. Practical steps could include developing and deploying a dedicated sales function or agency to assist independent professionals like Mia, creating robust support systems for administrative tasks, and establishing automated scheduling and communication tools. Additionally, fostering a collaborative environment through regular community events and online platforms can enhance the sense of belonging and professional growth among members. Pilot programs and feedback mechanisms should be established to continuously assess the effectiveness of these interventions, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of the community. Furthermore, expanding the study to include a broader range of entrepreneurial communities across different industries and regions could provide valuable insights and validate the applicability of the proposed solutions on a larger scale.

Future research directions

Future research directions could explore the longitudinal impacts of the implemented solutions on both the independent professionals and the community builder organization. Investigating the long-term effects on job satisfaction, retention rates, and overall community engagement would provide a deeper understanding of the sustainability and effectiveness of the interventions. Additionally, comparative studies between different entrepreneurial community models and their respective leadership and support structures could yield insights into best practices and innovative approaches. Another promising research avenue could be the exploration of digital tools and platforms that facilitate community building and support, assessing their efficacy in enhancing professional collaboration and reducing administrative burdens.

Understanding the role of technology in shaping modern entrepreneurial communities could inform the development of more sophisticated and user-friendly solutions. The triadic relationship between the end client, the community builder company, and the independent professionals also deserves more attention than this limited case study project could provide.



Figure 30: Illustration of future directions. Image generated using the prompt "create an image of a journeyer finishing an odyssey, only to see that the road continues to another journey. modern times" by OpenAI, DALL-E, 2023



When life
gives you
MONDAY,
dip it in glitter
and sparkle
all day

WE  LOVE
MONDAYS

OTA YHTEYTTÄ: info@welovemondays.fi | www.welovemondays.fi | +358 50 465 0350

References

- Albert, S. & Whetten, D. A. (1985). "Organizational identity". *Research in Organizational Behavior*. 7: 263-295.
- Alves, J. (2022, March 8). 4 efficient stakeholder mapping techniques. *Smapply Blog*. <https://www.smapply.com/blog/stakeholder-mapping-techniques>
- Amaxxa LLC (2024). Revolutionizing Leadership Development: The Minimum Viable Leader (MVL). <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/revolutionizing-leadership-development-minimum-viable-leader-mvl-aaxse/>
- Ashforth, B. E., Schinoff, B. S., & Brickson, S. L. (2020). My company is friendly, "Mine's a Rebel": anthropomorphism and shifting organizational identity from "What" to "Who". *Academy of Management Review*, 45(1), 29-57.
- Atlassian. (n.d.). What is the Definition of Done? <https://www.atlassian.com/agile/project-management/definition-of-done>
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic Networks: An Analytic Tool for Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405
- Beck, K., et al. (2001). *Manifesto for Agile Software Development*. <https://agilemanifesto.org/>
- Bellesia, F., Mattarelli, E., Bertolotti, F., & Sobrero, M. (2019). Platforms as entrepreneurial incubators? How online labor markets shape work identity. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 34(4), 246-268.
- Bonet, R., Cappelli, P., & Hamori, M. (2013). Labor market intermediaries and the new paradigm for human resources. *Academy of Management Annals*, 7(1), 341-392.
- Brown, T. (2008). Design thinking. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://readings.design/PDF/Tim%20Brown,%20Design%20Thinking.pdf>
- Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). Design thinking for social innovation. *Development Outreach*, 12(1), 29-43.
- Canva. (n.d.). How design thinking is used to solve problems. *Canva Design Inspiration*. Retrieved July 19, 2024, from <https://www.canva.com/learn/design-thinking/>
- Carmody, B. (2015, October). Minimum Viable Leadership: The 4 Things Your Start-Up Needs to Succeed. <https://www.inc.com/bill-carmody/minimum-viable-leadership-the-4-things-your-start-up-needs-to-succeed.html>
- Cramer, A. (2019, December 15). The basics of Stakeholder Mapping. *Smapply Blog*. <https://www.smapply.com/blog/stakeholdermaps>
- Dam, R. F., & Siang, T. Y. (2022). The history of design thinking. The Interaction Design Foundation. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/design-thinking-get-a-quick-overview-of-the-history>
- Dc, R. (2024, February 26). Brand Archetypes: What they are and how they can help your business grow. *Crowdspring Blog*. <https://www.crowdspring.com/blog/brand-archetypes/>
- Design Council. (n.d.). History of the Double Diamond - Design Council. <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-resources/the-double-diamond/history-of-the-double-diamond/>
- Digi-ark (2020), CC0, Double Diamond Design Process. Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/bd/Double_diamond.png/800px-Double_diamond.png
- Dimare, E. L., & Sorensen, J. (2019). Minimum Viable Leadership with Fire & Shield-A Nordic Inspired Practitioners' Approach to Responsible Leadership. *Academy of Management Global Proceedings*, (2019), 289.
- Ford, R. (2022, October 12). Design is not a formula, it's an Odyssey: Replacing the double diamond. *Medium*. <https://uxdesign.cc/design-is-not-a-process-its-an-odyssey-replacing-double-diamond-d6bc06965238>
- Davidson, A., Gleim, M. R., Johnson, C. M., & Stevens, J. L. (2023). Gig worker typology and research agenda: advancing research for frontline service providers. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*. Vol. ahead-of-print. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371782320_Gig_worker_typology_and_research_agenda_advancing_research_for_frontline_service_providers
- Gasparini, A. (2015). Perspective and use of empathy in design thinking. In *ACHI, the eight international conference on advances in computer-human interactions* (pp. 49-54).

- Geffers, K., Bretschneider, U., Eilers, K., & Oeste-Reiß, S. (2024, Jan 7-10). Leading Teams in Today's Dynamic Organizations: The Core Characteristics of Agile Leadership. HICCS Conference 57, Hawaii, United States. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kristin-Geffers/publication/377207711_Leading_Teams_in_Today's_Dynamic_Organizations_The_Core_Characteristics_of_Agile_Leadership
- Gibson, K. (2022) 3 Effective methods for assessing customer needs. *Business Insights Blog*. <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/effective-methods-for-assessing-customer-needs>
- Ghorbani, M., Karampela, M., & Tonner, A. (2022). Consumers' brand personality perceptions in a digital world: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 46(5), 1960-1991.
- Godesky, J. (2023, May 18). The Problem with the Double Diamond | Bootcamp. Medium. <https://bootcamp.uxdesign.cc/the-problem-with-the-double-diamond-57ab03719ce0>
- Greineder, M., & Leicht, N. (2020). Agile Leadership - A Comparison of Agile Leadership Styles, in 33rd Bled eConference: Enabling Technology for a Sustainable Society, Bled, Slovenia, June 28-July 1, 2020, A. Pucihar et al. (eds.), Bled, 24.
- Guido, G., & Peluso, A. M. (2015). Brand anthropomorphism: Conceptualization, measurement, and impact on brand personality and loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, 22, 1-19.
- Han, E. (2023). The importance of reflective leadership in business. Harvard Business School Online's Business Insights Blog. Retrieved July 11, 2024, from <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/the-importance-of-reflective-leadership-in-business>
- Hecker, J., & Kalpokas, N. (n.d.). What is thematic analysis? The Guide to Thematic Analysis. <https://atlasti.com/guides/thematic-analysis>
- Hopia, K. (2023) Personal communications as part of the service design project.
- Houraghan, S. (2024). Brand Archetypes: The Definitive Guide [36 Examples]. Iconic Fox. <https://iiconicfox.com.au/brand-archetypes/>
- IDEO Design Thinking. (n.d.). IDEO | Design Thinking. <https://designthinking.ideo.com/>
- The Interaction Design Foundation (2024). What is Design Thinking? <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-thinking>
- Kimura, J. (2023). Mick Jagger. Retrieved June 29, 2024, from <https://www.siriusxm.com/blog/mick-jaggers-career>. Getty Images
- Kouprie, M., & Sleeswijk Visser, F. (2009). A framework for empathy in design: stepping into and out of the user's life. *Journal of Engineering Design*, 20(5), 437-448.
- Kramp, J. (2014). MVL - Minimum Viable Leadership: What you must do every day. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140908110330-15155385-mvl-minimum-viable-leadership-what-you-must-do-every-day/>
- Liedtka, J., & Ogilvie, T. (2011). Designing for growth: A design thinking tool kit for managers. Columbia University Press.
- Lipiec, M. (2022). Beyond the Double Diamond: thinking about a better design process model. Medium. <https://uxdesign.cc/beyond-the-double-diamond-thinking-about-a-better-design-process-model-de4fdb902cf>
- Lucidspark, (n.d.) How to use brainwriting to generate ideas. <https://lucidspark.com/blog/how-to-use-brainwriting-for-idea-generation>
- McKinsey & Company (2021). Build your organizational identity. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/build-your-organizational-identity>
- Maidment, A. (2021). What are Brand Archetypes and why are they important? March. <https://marchbranding.com/buzz/brand-archetypes/>
- McGregor, L., Noshi, D. (2015). How company culture shapes employee motivation. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2015/11/how-company-culture-shapes-employee-motivation>
- Mogens Ejby Villadsen (2023). What is agile leadership? Better Change Consulting. <https://www.betterchange-consulting.com/resources/what-is-agile-leadership>

- Pichault, F., & McKeown, T. (2019). Autonomy at work in the gig economy: analysing work status, work content and working conditions of independent professionals. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 34(1), 59-72.
- van Prooijen, A. M., & Bartels, J. (2019). Anthropomorphizing brands: The role of attributed brand traits in interactive CSR communication and consumer online endorsements. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 18(6), 474-483.
- Ramsden, D. (2023, July 26). The limitations of the Double Diamond. <https://danramsdend.com/2023/07/26/the-limitations-of-the-double-diamond/>
- Razzetti, G. (2022). How to Reset and Evolve your company Culture – exercise. <https://www.fearlessculture.design/blog-posts/how-to-reset-and-evolve-your-company-culture-exercise>
- Ries, E. (2011). *The lean startup: How today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses*. Crown Currency.
- Ruiner, C., Wilkesmann, M. and Apitzsch, B. (2020), Staffing agencies in work relationships with independent contractors, *Employee Relations*, 42(2), 525-541.
- SiriusXM (2023). Mick Jagger Turns 80: A Look Back at His Illustrious Career. SiriusXM. <https://www.siriusxm.com/blog/mick-jaggers-career>
- Stickdorn, M., Hormess, M. E., Lawrence, A., & Schneider, J. (2018). This is Service Design Doing: Applying Service Design Thinking in the Real World. O'Reilly Media, Inc.
- Stickdorn, M., Lawrence, A., Hormess, M., & Schneider, J. (2018b). Interview guidelines. This Is Service Design Methods. <https://www.thisisservice设计doing.com/methods/interview-guidelines>
- Tams, S. & Arthur, M.B. (2010). New directions for boundaryless careers: agency and interdependence in a changing world. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(5), 629-646.
- Vink, J., & Oertzen, A. S. (2018, July). Integrating empathy and lived experience through co-creation in service design. In ServDes2018. Service Design Proof of Concept, Proceedings of the ServDes. 2018 Conference, 18-20 June, Milano, Italy (No. 150, pp. 471-483). Linköping University Electronic Press.
- Vinney, C. (2023, November 9). Desirability, feasibility and viability diagram: What does it mean? UX Design Institute. <https://www.uxdesigninstitute.com/blog/desirability-viability-and-feasibility/>
- Viswanath K, Synowiec C and Agha S. (2019) Responsive feedback: Towards a new paradigm to enhance intervention effectiveness [version 2; peer review: 4 approved]. Gates Open Research, 3:781 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/gatesopenres.12937.2>)
- What Could Be Ltd (2024). The Design Thinking Canvas. <https://www.whatcouldbe.com/viewpoints/designthinkingcanvas>
- Wray, H. (2023). Customer pain points: How to identify and resolve. Zendesk. Retrieved July 6, 2024, from <https://www.zendesk.com/blog/customer-pain-points/#examples>
- Wynn, D.C. and Eckert, C.M. (2017) Perspectives on iteration in design and development. *Research in Engineering Design* 28(2), 153-184.
- Yadav, M., Choudhary, S., & Jain, S. (2019). Transformational leadership and knowledge sharing behavior in freelancers: A moderated mediation model with employee engagement and social support. *Journal of Global Operations and Strategic Sourcing*, 12(2), 202-224.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

1. Are you an entrepreneur in a field related to work life development?

Yes/no (no=questionnaire ends)

2. What are your main activities? (choose max 3 most relevant or describe in your own words what you do)

- work counseling
- assessments for recruitment
- training services
- leadership development
- developing wellbeing at work
- coaching
- other

3. How long have you been an entrepreneur?

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- over 10 years

4. How many years in total have you been part of entrepreneurial communities?

- never
- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- over 10 years

5. How many entrepreneurial communities have you been part of?

- 1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6 or more

6. If you want, describe these communities (do not mention names of people, mentioning companies is not necessary) (optional)

7. Which of the following are the MOST IMPORTANT factors for you in entrepreneurial communities? (choose up to 5)

- sense of community
- sharing information
- events
- acquiring work
- a wider client base
- support in challenging client situations
- work spaces
- support for wellbeing at work
- equipment and systems
- project management
- contracts
- help with pricing
- sales and marketing
- advice for running a company
- participating in public tender processes
- compensation for work
- percentage of total billing

8. Describe your choices if you want (optional)

9. Which of the following are the LEAST IMPORTANT factors for you in entrepreneurial communities? (choose up to 5)

- sense of community
- sharing information
- events
- acquiring work
- a wider client base
- support in challenging client situations
- work spaces
- support for wellbeing at work
- equipment and systems
- project management
- contracts
- help with pricing
- sales and marketing
- advice for running a company
- participating in public tender processes
- compensation for work
- percentage of total billing

10. Describe your choices if you want (optional)

11. When working in entrepreneurial communities, how often have the following statements been true for you?

Scale: Never – rarely – sometimes yes, sometimes not – most of the time – always – I don't know

- The community has functioned well
- The service process from sales to execution has been seamless
- My share of the total billing has been fair
- The compensation has been in line with the amount of work required
- I have benefited from the community
- I have developed professionally
- Feedback has been actively collected
- I have received the kinds of assignments I want
- I have been able to develop client relationships
- The division of labor has been fair
- The contracts have been clear

12. In relation to your own expectations and needs, evaluate the following aspects of the entrepreneurial communities you have experience with

Scale: Completely insufficient – some deficiencies – quite okay – on a decent level – on a good level

- Amount of interaction
- Possibility to influence the type of clients
- Possibility to influence the amount of work
- Amount of support
- Quality of communication
- Leadership and organization
- Number of common events

13. Which aspects have you perceived as positive when being part of entrepreneurial communities? (open ended)

14. Which aspects of these communities have caused challenges for you? (open ended)

15. If you have left one or more of these communities, why did this happen? (open ended)

16. What are your wishes for leadership in these types of communities? (open ended)

17. If you were to join an entrepreneurial community now, what would you wish for? (open ended)

18. Which age group do you belong to?

- below 20 years old
- 21-30 years old
- 31-40 years old
- 41-50 years old
- 51-60 years old
- 60+ years old
- I prefer not to say

19. What is your gender?

- female
- male
- other
- I prefer not to say

20. What is your level of education?

- basic education or equivalent
- secondary education (high school, vocational degree or equivalent)
- Bachelor's level education
- Master's level education or PhD
- I prefer not to say

Appendix 2: Interview structure

Intro:

- All interviews are anonymous and confidential
- Any mentions of names will be removed in the transcription phase
- The focus is not on individual people or companies, but communities of independent entrepreneurs, where one company acts as an intermediary for entrepreneurs
- Right to opt out of the study at any time, even after this interview, in which case all data provided will be deleted and not used in the study

Interview:

- What kinds of communities of entrepreneurs have you been active in? For how long?
- Why did you decide to join these communities? Are you still involved with the ones you joined, or have you left some of them?
- How were they structured?
- Which aspects of these communities have supported your wellbeing at work?
- Which aspects have felt like they're straining your wellbeing at work?
- How have the client relationships been managed in these communities?
- How close do you feel your relationship has been with the end clients?
- Has this aspect of the communities worked well in your opinion? If/if not, what has contributed to this?
- If you have left one or more of these communities, why has that happened?
- Can you specify some events or phenomena that have made you consider leaving, even if you haven't done so?
- If you were to join one of these communities now, what would you wish for?
- What are your thoughts around leadership of these communities?
- If you could design one of these communities to be perfect, what would it look like (free ideation)?