



# Developing Employee Experiences with Service Design and Play. Case: Personal Development Toolkit

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**Developing Employee Experiences with Service Design and Play.  
Case: Personal Development Toolkit**

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Employees are individuals with different roles, responsibilities, attitudes, goals, motivations, values, dreams. Such complexity must be acknowledged in the new way organizations design their relationship with employees, especially when it comes to personal development at the workplace. Thinking of employees as customers can be the key to promote meaningful employee experiences and consequently improve business outcomes such as higher employee engagement, alignment, retention and satisfaction.

The present study examined personal development from the employee perspective, within the context of a case company employing about 50 professionals in the consulting business. The selected theoretical foundation comprised of concepts in organizational psychology, management, employee experience design and play theory. As for main results, service design methods and play principles were used to connect with employees, map needs and expectations, generate insights, identify priority opportunities and prototype solutions to facilitate personal development experiences for creative knowledge workers.

As for main outcomes, a toolkit was developed to refresh personal development approaches at the workplace by empowering employee ownership and co-design. Five templates and one set of feedback cards offer opportunities for collaboration in improving employee self-awareness, envisioning futures, defining achievable goals, supporting reaching achievements and celebrating growth. Furthermore, these tools can also contribute to organizations helping them empathize and develop a whole employee perspective, as well as nurture alignment of values and goals between individuals and teams.

Keywords: employee experience design, service design, play, collaboration, personal development, career growth

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## 1 Re-imagining the relationship with work

Industrial revolution introduced machinery in big scale to the workplace and transformed human relationship with work. As technology automation improved machine capacity as well as profit margins, employees were comparably seen as costly resources. In 1959 Drucker coined the concept of knowledge worker, suggesting that employees' main contribution is their ability of creative thinking rather than task execution. During 70's such new perspective to labor gained force, according to which the organization was to be a community and workers' knowledge its key assets. The global economy has been since evolving from **extracting value** out of goods exchange, into **building value** around knowledge exchange and service experiences.

Today's knowledge economy took its shape through the development and boom of computer technology and the internet in 70's-80's, which introduced us to unprecedented automation but also created millions of jobs which didn't exist before (Manyika & Sneider 2018). An intense new jobs and roles creation will continue in the near future at a rate of 10% new types of occupations by 2030, Manyika & Sneider (2008) predict, crediting a foreseeable growth in productivity and economic growth.

Technology has been however, at the same time, disrupting businesses, behaviors and, unfortunately, also disrupting the planet's environment. An evolving counter trend framed as the purpose economy (Hurst 2014) highlights a rising longing for meaning and connection to oneself, others and the planet, and connects to new ways people are seeking to consume, do business and perform work. Therefore, as new generations enter the workforce, they bring along also to the workplace mindsets that are shaped on new values, behaviors and expectations. Workforce profile evolution is not a new phenomenon however, as a McKinsey study points out (Manyika & Sneider 2018) how organizations have always adapted to new types of jobs and employee profiles throughout history.

But generation Y, also labelled "millennials", and generation Z are also trading stable salaries and traditional career paths for flexibility and following passions. It's possible to also observe in employees a growing desire to connect personal and organizational purpose (Hurst 2014; Morgan 2017). While the aforementioned generations already start to dominate the labour market, organizations have not yet completely adapted fast enough, and many continue to approach employees from a legacy perspective which assumes climbing a lifelong career ladder is any individual's biggest goal in life. The workplace based on outdated structures tends to systematically ignore personal dreams and thus is at high risk to fail supporting true self-development (Gruber et al. 2015).

At the same time, while the current western society shifts towards a nuclear family model, roles and responsibilities tend to be shared more equally amongst parents. That means that without the help of extended family, housework and family responsibilities make up nowadays a bigger chunk of employees' daily life, female and male. These certainly have more impact on work than ever before and cannot be ignored any longer.

In fact, research supports (Gilbert 2012) that personal concerns tend to affect focus at work, might decrease productivity of knowledge workers up to 50%, as well as decrease happiness during a workday. Now more than ever, organizations must be ready to connect with employees and provide support on a personal level.

It's also possible to observe the value of human asset in businesses is growing, mostly thanks to the acknowledgement of employee's direct impact in customer experience success. Firstly, organizations re-imagined the employee relationship with the physical space. Gruber et al. (2015) explains that human interaction, as well as collaborative and interdisciplinary ways of working are greatly enabled by the design of virtual and physical environments. Open plan offices, co-working areas, flexible and mobile working conditions are a few of the answers to employee needs, but the organization must also refresh the relationships with the employee.

It's crucial, in the current economy, to strengthen human centrism at work and develop an empathetic perspective of employees as whole entities with multiple needs, aspirations, challenges and roles in work and personal life. This requires the redesign of the cultural environment employees interact with, like processes (Morgan 2017), and personal development is one of them.

In fact, research shows (Mitroff & Denton 1999) that the number one factor that gives employees meaning and purpose at work is the ability to realize one's full potential. Providing truly valuable opportunities for self-realization, continuous learning, and development is expected to foster meaningful experiences at work because of intrinsic reward. Milliman et al. (2003) suggest that the more one experiences personal purpose and meaning in one's work, the more they experience satisfaction.

At the same time, personal life has been systematically treated as a perspective that does not belong in the workplace. That explains why employee development models tend to focus on professional aspects only. But younger generations are prone to fail perceiving personal development processes as valuable employee experiences when they cannot see direct connections to individual self-actualization (Pandita & Ray 2018).

Based on this reality, this thesis's inspiration is to explore opportunities for a more enjoyable and employee driven approach to personal development at the workplace. Such approach could empower employees take active ownership of their careers. Could help organizations

make sense of the interconnectedness of personal life and work life. Ultimately, such approach could inspire organizations to play a more supportive role in employee journeys towards more than career growth: towards overall balanced, meaningful, happy present and future life.

## 2 Thesis structure

This report is composed of 6 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the context that supports the need for the study. Chapter 2 defines the thesis frame, objectives and research questions, as well as scope delimitations. In chapter 3 we find the knowledge basis with concepts important for understanding employee experience design, personal development in the context of work and playful methods in employee experience. Chapter 4 describes in full detail the empirical process, while chapter 5 presents the research results and toolkit concept outcome. Finally, chapter 6 is dedicated to a dialogue between the results and the knowledge basis, offers future recommendations and final reflection.

### 2.1 Scope and delimitations

Firstly, I would like to address the research framing. Personal development is a rich field of study, having been analyzed within multiple disciplines from sociology, psychology and spirituality to organizational behaviour and management. Besides academic attention, personal development is also an industry currently enjoying considerable popularity. Because growth is so intrinsic to humans, personal development experiences can happen in a variety of different contexts like educational system, workplace, hobby, professional mentorship.

I acknowledge there is a variety of perspectives to personal development, however it is necessary to restrict my perspective. The scope of this research is therefore focused on personal development at the workplace, since this is the setting where the empirical part of this research happens. Having said that, I hope to offer contribution to facilitate personal growth as well as professional growth. Although I examine the main topics that relate to employee perceptions of personal development, this work aims to be flexible enough to be useful also to individuals who are not necessarily employees, such as the unemployed, entrepreneurs, students.

Secondly, I would like to clarify the role of service design in the thesis. The focus of this thesis is not on dissecting service design theory and its variety of approach models or creating a comparative analysis of service design tools. Service design's key contribution in this work is to function as a lens for conducting research, providing structure and tools to support the development work process. To that end, I would still like to add how exactly the service design process is scoped. The final ambition of this thesis is to develop a concept prototype.

To be able to reach that outcome I must fully complete 3 out of the 4 steps of the design process (Discover, Define, Develop). The fourth and last step (Delivery) will be partially completed. The concept will be delivered to the case company; however, concept implementation and testing will be executed by the case company and are consequently out of scope for the thesis report.

## 2.2 Purpose, objectives and research question

The context introduction just presented earlier frames a hypothesis that **employee experiences of personal development at the workplace could be better facilitated by a more employee driven approach**. As this is a qualitative research rather than a quantitative analysis, the term hypothesis is being here used from the perspective of establishing a setting of problems to be explored. Applied qualitative research has as its main purpose the understanding of nature and sources of society and individual problems, with a general approach but clearly limited application context as possible (Patton 2015).

Based on both the problem statement above and aforementioned thesis delimitations, the purpose of this research is to gather the necessary understanding of personal development in the workplace, reflect on individual experiences, and propose a fresh approach to this type of employee experience. In order to achieve this, the purpose is broken down into concrete objectives:

- To use service design and play to design a fresh approach to personal development.
- To experiment the possibilities of facilitating employee experience interviews with playful methods.
- To use qualitative data to empathize with employees and develop understanding of personal development experiences at the workplace.
- To identify key motivations, challenges and enablers of personal growth.
- To identify important elements for a holistic growth (as employee and person).
- To propose tangible and enjoyable solutions in personal development.

The process of formulating research, analyzing data and answering research question in this thesis follows qualitative research methodology theory presented by Patton (2015). According to him, to formulate qualitative inquiry questions one can follow a simple set of guidelines: approach it as an iterative process, frame a specific question inside a larger context, formulate as fewer questions as possible and keep questions open-ended, be flexible and approach questions as guiding points of the discovery journey, not rigid milestones written on stone.

**RQ: How might play be used in designing employee driven personal development experiences?**

With this question I framed my aim to investigate what happens if you apply a lens of play to the service design process when designing employee experiences within personal development context, specifically.

To answer it I conduct desk research, workshop and employee interviews to identify challenges and improvement opportunities within personal development experiences at workplace. I also conduct literature review to investigate what makes playful methods a value-add to the workplace and scout evidence where play has been successfully applied to organizational processes. Then I formulate possible solutions in the form of tools and answers to the research question.

### 3 Theoretical framework

In order to understand employee experiences and challenges around personal development and get prepared for proposing solutions, the theoretical lens selected to approach this thesis focuses on concepts within organizational psychology and behaviour, employee experience design and play.

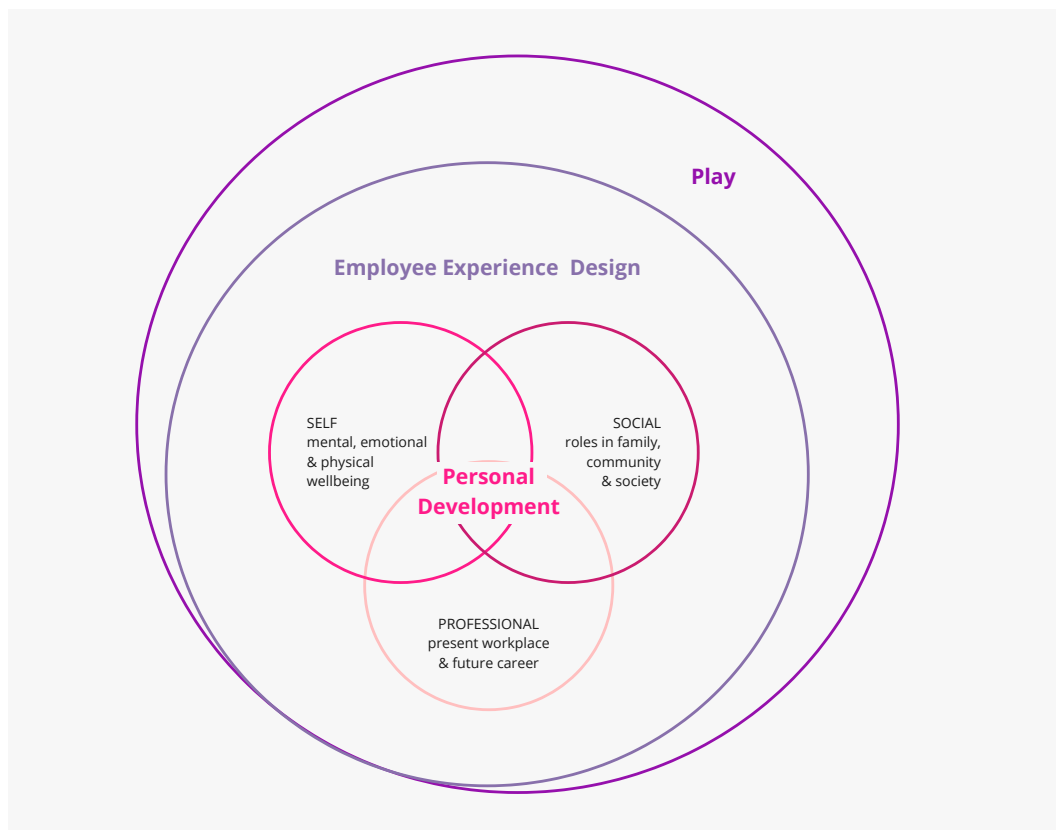


Figure 1: Theoretical lenses of the thesis

Organizational psychology and behaviour research studies social interactions and their effect on the individual and the organization. This thesis focused on covering such concepts like employee motivation, work meaningfulness and satisfaction, performance management, self-leadership, organizational culture and collaboration, for support to understanding the individual, factors and practices for meaningful personal development (three small circles).

Employee experience design literature opens the employee paths within the organization, as well as key principles and methods how to improve experiences, at the same time exposing links with employee alignment, engagement and ultimately happiness (middle circle).

Finally, developmental psychology studies in the field of play, especially Sutton-Smith's work shed light on the value of bringing to organizational context concepts that remained specific to childhood development. Case studies with playful methods applied to service design processes and employee experiences provided the driving inspiration for this thesis' development work and main outcome (outer circle).

### 3.1 Designing Employee Experiences

As introduced earlier organizations begin to truly recognize that people are their greatest asset, especially when it becomes increasingly visible how the worker has direct impact in business results. They begin to advertise employment opportunities as they advertise services and products (Drucker 1992) because, like customers, employees today have greater access to options.

Giving some perspective to the context of Finland, local data harvested by recruiting services (Meet Frank 2020) indicates that the job market for creative knowledge workers, especially in the tech sector, is less competitive than the Europe average. Demand is already high and still expected to grow due to the overall investment boost the sector is experiencing. Such data illustrates a problem organizations find themselves facing, framed by Drucker (1992) as an intense competition for employees and a need to go the extra mile to attract, retain, recognize, reward, motivate, serve and satisfy talent.

Adding to this scenario, the millennial generation of employees is heavily influenced by employer branding (the combination of a company's values, brand and reputation) when building their perception, and are not afraid to move on when they fail to feel there is a match. As West & al. (2017) frame it: "Millennial employee generation is not afraid to experiment, also in the professional context. They will seek jobs that align with their values and personal growth goals. Providing a playful and creative work climate is becoming a competitive advantage for organizations to acquire & retain this talent."



To tackle the challenge, concepts such as employee experience have been gaining traction and investment as a strategy to strengthen employer attractiveness in Finland. This is reflected by the latest National Recruitment Survey (2020) study results. Duunitori surveyed 268 talent acquisition professionals from Finnish companies and found that organizations have started giving HR leaders time and money to improve employee experience.

Historically there has been a disconnect between customer experiences and employee experiences. However, when people get used to enjoying quality consumer experiences on a day-to-day basis, they start expecting similar from experiences at the workplace. Deloitte (2018) introduces results from a study conducted in 2015 by researcher Vanessa Thompson that supports applying a **customer lens** to seeing employees is an efficient way to help companies increase the level of quality to workplace experiences.

What exactly is employee experience and how to design for it? This is a deep question that several researchers have dedicated exclusive investigation. The objective of this thesis does not include attempting to formulate my own perspective to employee experience design. Instead, I focus only on describing key concepts according to main authors.

Employee experience (EX) represents a holistic set of needs, expectations and perceptions one employee collects throughout interactions with the employer organization structures, processes and people, including co-workers, supervisors and customers. Employee experiences as such are highly personal and individualized (Plaskoff 2017; Morgan 2017; Morris 2017).

Organizations looking into improving the quality of work experiences for their employees have been turning to design disciplines after mindset and methods for innovating the HR management approach (Morris (2017)). Holistic and human-centred principles are borrowed from design thinking (DT); while multidisciplinary, co-creative, and iterative methodology are contributions coming from service design (SD). That, in a nutshell, is the definition of the emerging practice of employee experience design (EX design).

Examples of design methods currently used in the EX context are basically the same as applied to customer experience design, except that placing the employee as the main actor: double-diamond process approach, personas, life cycle maps and journeys, prototypes. Examples of EX design projects focus on improving workspace conditions, optimizing internal processes, introducing new tools usually to address employee needs and expectations, or strengthening working culture and values like transparency.



Figure 2: Example of employee life cycle map (Triggs 2018)

Documenting an employee life cycle map is a key starting point in EX design process. To be able to truly empathize and address employee needs or challenges, it is important to frame the life cycle map from employee's perspective with terms such as **applying for the job**, **getting started**, **learning & growing** instead of recruiting, onboarding, developing and so on.

### 3.2 Personal Development

The impact of employees on business results has been increasingly recognized. Morgan (2017) supports an engaged and motivated workforce, besides profitability, can also improve business value in terms of innovation and customer satisfaction. Organizations have been listening and increasing their efforts to create meaningful and positive employee experiences and career satisfaction.

Looking at the employee life cycle, organizations identify different opportunities for improving employee experience. Recruiting and onboarding are simple starting points, they have a very specific scope and limited timeframe. In this thesis I chose to look at employee development stage of the employee journey, which has a bit different dynamics since it is formed by a continuous series of journeys, instead of a single role-based lifecycle (Deloitte 2018).

Plaskoff (2017) demonstrates that design methodology applied to human resource management approach can truly help organizations provide meaningful, valuable, empowering experiences to employees. My motivation was to investigate whether employee development experiences are enough human-centred instead of process driven. Service design process and methods provide just the fitting approach necessary for wearing someone else's shoes and thinking from the other's perspective (Plaskoff 2017).

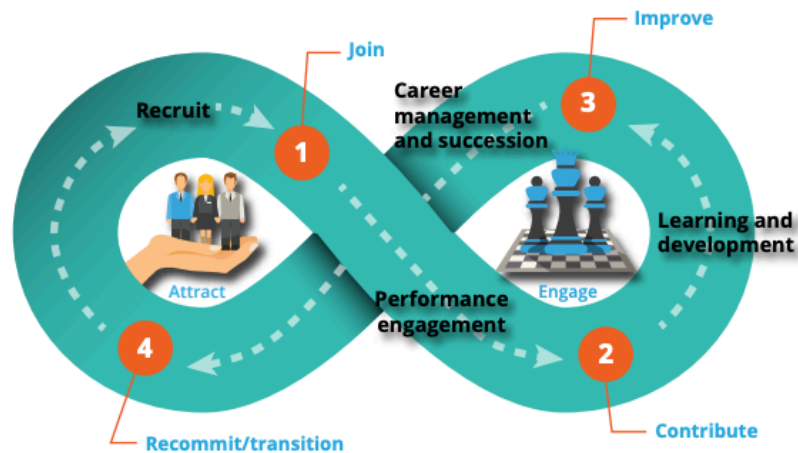


Figure 3: Employee career model (Deloitte 2018)

Personal development in the workplace context revolves around a framework of career plan, performance evaluation and training. Often personal development paths are readily designed for employees (not with employees), trainings are assigned based on performance feedback, and boxes are checked-off when goals are achieved. Such development framework has been designed as managerial tools, their reason for existing being to strategically develop organization capability, maintain effective operations and profit.

Deloitte (2018) has analyzed various studies in employee experience design, including one from 2015 where researcher Vanessa Thompson shows how treating employees as customers reframes also the employee career model. The model shows a shift from a structure to **manage** (traditional HR processes) towards a structure to **attract and engage** employees.

### Empowering whole person development

“People have far more freedom in fashioning their work lives than it has been typical in other times” (Brown 2002, 85). Individuals in society are expected to choose and develop a career not only for their own welfare but also for the welfare of their community. Individual development theories focus on supporting the process of constructing a career. An interesting **person-centred approach** featured in a study by Super in 1953 (Brown 1996) is based on identifying patterns that emerge from a person's story. The process focus is on clarifying the

person's self-concept (own image, values, behaviours) for then encouraging the individual on career moves towards work roles that are more aligned with the self.

Since the 90's Drucker highlights the importance of lifelong learning saying "it is safe to assume that anyone with any knowledge will have to acquire new knowledge every four or five years or become obsolete" (Drucker 1992). A bit later he gets even more specific in terms of career and points out that (due to an average longer life) one should always prepare to reinvent oneself for a second career as source of motivation, be it for reason of boredom or personal life challenges the future might bring (Drucker 2008).

Organizations also expect employees to have the ability to identify growth opportunities and improve own contribution, however they need a more human and holistic approach to employee development, one that considers individuals as part of a wider society with multiple roles (Maslow 1993) instead of isolated entities. HR solutions need to switch away from organization centred, process driven, performance tracking talent development towards supporting true personal growth not only for present role but for the career.

Caring for the whole person (Mitroff & Denton 1999) means nurturing a new type of relationship between organization and employee, one that recognizes a mutual responsibility to support each other's growth. Drucker explains (1992) that, because knowledge workers typically are highly specialized experts with some autonomy in their work, they can be challenging to manage and therefore appreciate the supervisor as a coach. The role of a manager in this new relationship dynamics is not to command, but to inspire and facilitate opportunities for personal development (Drucker 1992). He introduces the idea that this type of management trusts the employee to achieve set goals, while employees must learn to manage themselves.

Managing oneself is not a natural gift though, but a skill to be learned for meaningful personal development. To effectively self-manage own growth, employees must have the ability to understand what parts they play in the world, which can be achieved by self-awareness (Drucker 2008). Recent research (Eurich 2018) also shows self-aware individuals tend to feel more empowered, fulfilled and creative, tend to have stronger relationships and perform better at work.

The key importance of self-awareness, Drucker explains (2008) is about the employee developing skill to understand own values and strengths through feedback analysis and self-reflection. Instead of focusing growth on correcting low performance, Drucker believes the employee should focus on own strengths for a better strategy to achieve excellence.

"One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence

to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence. And yet most people—especially most teachers and most organizations—concentrate on making incompetent performers into mediocre ones. Energy, resources, and time should go instead to making a competent person into a star performer” (Drucker 2008, 9).

Recent research (Buckingham & Goodall 2019) also supports the regular practice of awareness as an efficient method to measure own growth. Feedback however, has been found to inhibit personal development more than support, because “humans are unreliable raters of other’s performances and individuals themselves are their best evaluators” (2019, 95). The key recommendation in the study is to use feedback as a tool for supporting the exercise of self-awareness, instead of measuring personal growth. To avoid unproductive self-reflection, researchers recommend asking “what” instead of “why”. Eurich (2018) explains: “What” questions help us stay objective, future-focused, and empowered to act on our new insights”.

#### **Motivation & Rewards**

Employees today have a different attitude towards work and life in general compared to earlier generations. Employees are still individuals and thus differently motivated, and so are their perspectives on rewards. But especially in the case of the knowledge employee, Drucker (2008) hints that work tasks must have clear ties to goals and personal interests to support motivation and job satisfaction. From psychological perspective too, according to Maslow’s hierarchical view of human motivation (1943) once basic needs are covered, human motivation is driven upwards the pyramid model, towards self-actualization.

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Reward</b>
Extrinsic	Action is done in order to get an external reward in return.	Involves external gains or avoiding consequences. Focus on outcomes that don’t satisfy basic psychological needs.	Money, promotion, fame, power...
Intrinsic	Action is done because it’s internally rewarding.	Comes from within and the outcomes satisfy basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, relatedness, purpose.	Fun, enjoyment, satisfaction...

Table 1: Summary of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors based on Pink (2011)

More recent studies also support how intrinsic motivation has become more important and prevalent in the workplace today. Pink (2011) says extrinsic rewards do not anymore motivate creative knowledge workers. Buckingham & Goodall (2019) say once individuals feel pay is fair and their basic needs are covered, extrinsic rewards such as extra money have no impact on motivation for personal development, higher performance or engagement. In fact, extrinsic incentives e.g. bonuses can undermine intrinsic motivation and deteriorate company culture.

Latest user data (Meet Frank 2020) shows that average salaries in the Finnish tech sector are above the European average for positions matching the sector in which the case company operates. While financial reward in exchange for work will remain an important satisfaction factor for employees, organizations must figure out effective intrinsic motivator factors for the new generations. Drucker illustrates saying “loyalty can no longer be obtained by the paycheck. The organization must earn loyalty by proving to its employees that it offers them exceptional opportunities for putting their knowledge to work” (Drucker 1992).

McGregor (2006) according to his Theory X believes that employees who must be commanded are better motivated by rewards, extrinsic factors. According to his Theory Y, experts who can be self-managed and need little supervision (like knowledge workers) are self-motivated by intrinsic factors such as examples shown in Table 2. Mitroff and Denton (1999) support the number one factor driving intrinsic motivation is the ability to realize one’s full potential.

<b>Intrinsic Motivation Factors</b>	
Curiosity	Curiosity pushes us to explore and learn for the sole pleasure of learning and mastering.
Challenge	Being challenged helps us work at a continuously optimal level work toward meaningful goals.
Control	This comes from our basic desire to control what happens and make decisions that affect the outcome.
Recognition	We have an innate need to be appreciated and satisfaction when our efforts are recognized and appreciated by others.
Cooperation	Cooperating with others satisfies our need for belonging. We also feel personal satisfaction when we help others and achieve a shared goal.
Competition	Competition poses a challenge and increases the importance we place on doing well.

Fantasy	Fantasy involves using mental or virtual images to stimulate behaviour.
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Table 2: Summary of factors promoting intrinsic motivation based on McGregor (2006)

### Personal development & happiness

What does it mean to feel happy or satisfied with life? And why should organizations care about this question? Besides psychologists, researchers in economy and neuroscience have become interested in understanding happiness and how to maximize it for better business results. Harvard professor Daniel Gilbert (2012) defines two kinds of happiness: natural and synthetic.

Natural happiness is supposed to be a result of achieving a vision, what is likely to be experienced when the person knows what she wants. Gilbert (2012) finds employees are happiest when they are trying to achieve goals that are difficult but not out of reach. Synthetic happiness would result from positive but unplanned results, experienced when there was no pre-defined goal. Klapperich & al. (2018) finds that happiness is experienced in everyday life, through a chain of small meaningful and enjoyable actions (like a routine).

Sources for happiness:

- **Social network** family, friends and supports, and the strength of these bonds
- **Challenge** trying to achieve difficult goals, remaining out of threats
- **Commitment** consistency and frequency in small behaviours for positive experiences (rather than intense & rare positive experiences)

At work specifically, Milliman et al. (2013) suggest the ability to be flexible and autonomous encourages initiative, creativity and self-expression. The more one fulfils the needs to direct one's own life (autonomy), to learn and create new things (competence or mastery), to do better by oneself and the world (purpose), the more they experience satisfaction, both professional and personal (Milliman et al. 2013). Intrinsic motivation, personal fulfilment, continuous learning and development are directly connected to happiness. Gilbert (2012) outlined a process that in fact places happiness as the ultimate goal of personal development processes.

Maslow (1993) argues that being prevented of pursuing meaningful personal and professional growth has direct implications with feelings like anxiety and unhappiness, while employees who are able to address self-actualization needs connect work and enjoyment or fun more easily. Seligman (2002) also suggests that the practice of playfulness can facilitate authentic happiness.

### 3.3 Play at the Workplace

Play is a natural part of everyday life and yet a rather ambiguous concept. People attribute different meanings to it. Throughout his extensive research of play theory, psychologist Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) identified seven rhetorics or different perceptions connected to the concept of play (Table 3). His life's work also highlighted how play is important to healthy social and emotional development in childhood. In its multiple forms and shapes, play can stimulate mentally or physically, help exercise and develop practical skills, and perform an educational or psychological role. Common components to play typically include all or some of the following: goals, rules, challenges and interactions.

While widely researched in the context of childhood and education, play has not been as widely studied in organizational context. West, S., Madsen, N., Madsen, J., Dahl, J. & Persson, M. (2017) suggest it may be related to play typically receiving in adulthood the connotation of frivolity, meaning the opposite of seriousness: "As we enter the workforce, a playful attitude to life is often replaced by the serious business of being a responsible adult" (West & al. 2017, 08).

<b>Play as a...</b>	<b>Means...</b>
Form of progress	Learning through practice
Exercise in power	Sports and contests
Reliance on fate	Games of chance and gambling
Claim for identity	Social identities, culture, community
Form of frivolity	Tricks, protest against order
Issue of the imagination	Creativity and innovation
Manifestation of personal experience	Relaxation from everyday life

Table 3: Summary based on the seven rhetorics of play by Sutton-Smith (1997)

However, as ambiguous as the term play still remains for humans, research after research keeps showing that work is not the opposite of play (Sutton-Smith 1997; West et al. 2017). Play is connected to emotions such as belonging, and activities such as collaboration and having fun; direct opposites are respectively solitude, isolation and sadness, as West et al. frame the opposite of play actually being boredom and depression (2017).



Fullerton & al. (2004) drawing from research with play and games, describe playfulness as a state of mind and support that a playful approach can also be applied to serious or difficult contexts. So, how could fun and play create value in the business world? LEGO asked themselves this same question as they were facing significant financial difficulties and needed to renew their business.

The Danish toy manufacturer went on to identify within play the elements that support exercising the **capacity to imagine and innovate, to collaborate, to feel belonging and build community, to learn, to balance life between duty and relaxation**. Especially when it comes to improving customer and employee experiences, creativity and capacity for innovation are increasingly considered key business skills. When we are asked to think outside the box, thinking as our inner child can be a good method for thinking differently from everyday patterns. Reviewing play literature, I was able to identify key types of contribution for the workplace context:

- **Play for Safe Collaboration**

West & al. (2017) refers to studies where both academic professors like Amy Edmondson (1999) and Silicon Valley researchers at Google (2012) have found that in business contexts, psychological safety is the key factor for successful teams. These are teams that truly have a culture of accepting failure and problems, because they are seen from a positive perspective as opportunities for learning. A playful attitude to work and colleagues makes it possible to create such environment where individuals trust, support and are comfortable with each other: “teams that have fun together feel more comfortable discussing and learning from their mistakes” (West & al. 2017, 42).

- **Play for Unfiltered Creativity**

“During play, we don’t foresee an end product. Without a finished plan, the future is yet unknown and therefore full of opportunities instead of challenges” (Beatty & Schneider 1997). Play is connected to spontaneity, contributing to the creation of a positive environment and enabling opportunity-driven mindset, like the approach also seen in the How Might We method of framing problems into opportunities.

- **Play for Effectiveness**

Research suggests (Roos 2007) that approaching work tasks in more experimental ways, spending time playing with different approaches or tools instead of going directly to fail-proof ways, improves work efficiency. While in the context of work a common perception is that of play as a time waste, in his business strategy books about how to create a flexible and innovative organization Roos acknowledges (2007, 16) that “the use of hands and 3D artifacts

help structure, summarize and share our thoughts. Object-mediated communication improves sense-making and common agreement”.

- **Play for Employee Engagement**

Research (Fluegge-Woolf 2014) suggests that having fun while performing work tasks is likely to improve not only employee productivity and engagement, but also something what’s known as organizational citizenship behaviour. Organizational citizenship behaviour is described by Fluegge-Woolf (2014) as a voluntary commitment to an organization’s success. Such behaviours are supposed to include actions taken on the interest of the organization, as a whole, as opposed to the attitude of only performing tasks which are pre-defined in the role.

Back to LEGO, they investigated what strategic play could look like in the organization. The company recognized traditional working models weren’t supporting creativity and collaboration. The goal was to concept a way to enable managers describe, create and challenge their views on the business & traditional working session formats. Key principles defined to facilitate playful collaboration are building, sharing & negotiating meaning; thinking with hands, storytelling & metaphors, everyone builds, everyone tells (Blair & Rillo 2016). The key finding in combining such elements is that the human interaction gains a new focus: when ideas are represented concretely, in a way that participants can really point at it, the collaboration process stays focused on the idea itself, not on the people or hierarchy.

The result of the research was coined as structured play methodology LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP). Playing with bricks activated employees to shift away from a **leaning back** type of working collaboration where 20% talks and 80% just listen; towards a **leaning forward** contribution model where 100% of participants engage and co-create. More recently, in 2012, a new process model was created by Google Ventures similarly proposing creative and leaning forward perspectives to team collaboration for business innovation (Knapp & al. 2016). Making a comparison between the two approaches, GV Design Sprint and LSP, both provide strong structures for collaborative problem solving and innovative thinking, the former mainly through Design Thinking principles and the latter mainly through principles of play.

Since 2010 this open-source methodology where bricks are used as tools to facilitate collaboration has remained perhaps the most famous example of structured play applied to business context. LEGO as a tool can also be used outside of the LSP methodology and can be combined with different Service Design methods and other methodologies.

In the meanwhile, playfulness has been strategically applied to methods in corporate environments worldwide for business innovation product and service development, processes development, facilitating organizational change, improving customer and employee experiences. Mekky & Lucero (2016) point out that when applied to the stages of the

collaborative design process, most common stages for play approach are in sessions for generating, prototyping and evaluating ideas.

These researchers go ahead to encourage organizations to explore the potential of playful methods since they can easily generate more benefits than costs. “First, our findings suggest that, in a context where time is money, playfulness can be included in a quick and inexpensive way and provide an unexpected source of inspiration in the design process” (Mekky & Lucero 2016, 3141). That is a powerful observation since money and time are key resources in the adult world of work.

Besides being a popular methodology for business innovation, playfulness has been also found to be useful when applied to employee experience design contexts. A few examples worth mentioning below show how structured play and design games are used by organizations as a method for improving employee experiences and metrics. Employee experience contexts range from recruiting, to training & development, to team collaboration. For example, play can facilitate communication between hiring managers and candidates, supervisors and employee, between co-workers in a team, between organization and employees.

Within recruiting interviews, play can be a method for creating genuine interactions neither candidates nor managers can really rehearse for. Marc Vandyck (2016) found that a job interview with LEGO may allow, for example, recruiting managers to assess a candidate’s ability to adapt to change, which is an important individual skill. In today’s quickly changing world, organizations seek employees who can easily adapt and change own behaviour or mindset, in order to deal with new work and life situations as smoothly as possible. Observing how an individual plays allows for more observations regarding one’s collaboration style and openness, communication and prioritization skills, real-time stress-coping abilities, creativity.

A play approach may also be experimented to facilitate feedback sessions, or for example one-to-one conversations where employees have better chances of getting heard and understood; and supervisors can uncover hidden feelings and motivations which otherwise might be challenging to grasp. Facilitator Patrizia Bertini developed in 2009 the LSP-derived interview technique LegoViews. The approach is based on object-mediated discussion, meaning interviewer and interviewee process and challenge information through brick toys, instead of interviewer extracting information out of the interviewee. She firmly supports that building answers to questions instead of only speaking also helps communicate more effectively “because hands know more than you know and can reveal more than you think” (Bertini 2013).

Indeed, physically engaging with toys or even mundane objects (like paper and pencil) is proven by science to facilitate human thought process from abstract (ideas, values and emotions) to concrete metaphors, examples and wishes. The traditional interview format

sitting facing each other indicates, in body language, a situation of power where one is the conductor and the other is the subject. When play is applied as a method, interview dynamics changes and assume a more collaborative character of constructing information together.

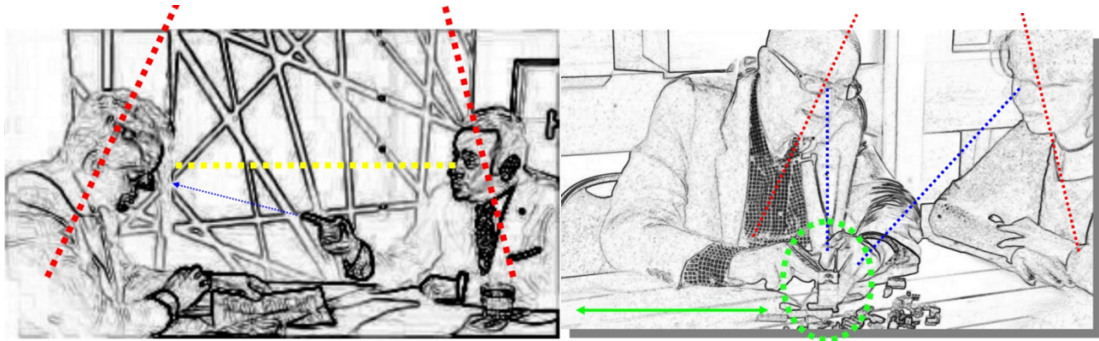


Figure 4: Focus on the messenger/focus on the message (Bertini 2013)

Playfulness can also be a method for developing employees and competences. LSP has been successfully applied for example on Scrum training, introducing employees to agile thinking through playful simulations. By result employees acquire new knowledge and capability. Other examples can also be found outside of LSP.

For instance, in Finland, a high-end department store once adopted a tailored-made game for training employees in developing customer support competence. The game used a playful approach in order to present employees with challenging customer service simulations. While playing, employees learn solutions and gain confidence of own problem-solving capabilities almost effortlessly (Mattelmäki & al. 2018).

As a final example, an inspiring case also presented by Mattelmäki & al. (2018) features a playful approach to personal development, being perhaps the closest in context to this thesis. The playful method in question was a game that, designed based on sets of cards, was flexible enough for adding personalization to performance discussions in the public sector. With all cases presented above I have tried to illustrate in concrete ways how play can be present at organizations in employees day-to-day, at the core of work process and practices. Through these examples I also strived to demonstrate how playful methods as part of work processes can indeed foster more enjoyable work environments and more meaningful employee interaction experiences.

#### 4 Development setting

Chapter 2 defined the thesis frame, objectives and research questions. Chapter 3 presented key concepts from relevant literature. In this chapter 4 are described the research process

and methods. First, I open the context for development work by introducing the case company. Then, I introduce the research methodology framework that gives the thesis it’s foundations. Lastly, I approach the development process describing in detail the different phase, methods selected and outcomes for each step of this qualitative research.

**Case company**

The empirical part of this study was conducted in the context of a digital business consultancy employing about 50 creative knowledge workers in Finland, here introduced as “case company”. As an employee of the firm myself, the decision to use the thesis research as a laboratory to improve employee experiences was in our mutual interest. The topic of personal development aligned with my passion and was received with enthusiasm by the case company, who provided full support in the form of access to data and resources.

As a workplace strongly driven by agile and lean methodologies, employees enjoy high levels of autonomy and responsibility in their daily work. Naturally the same operational model also extends to internal processes and policies. At the moment of this study, the current state of personal development in the case company is based on development discussions that happen twice a year, and supportive structures available for employees to use autonomously.

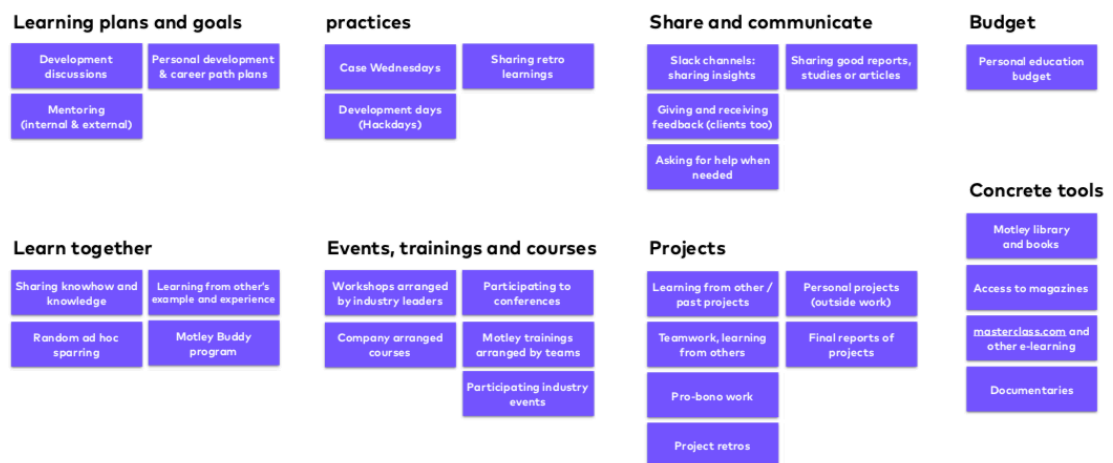


Figure 5. Structures and tools for personal development in the case company

Existing EX structures or tools include onboarding program, dedicated days for working on projects of own interest, sharing knowledge sessions, education budget and own library, among others. Throughout the research and data analysis I identify with employee the existing structures available and investigate how supportive they are, according to employees own perspectives.

My main collaborator from the case company throughout the thesis process is a colleague in the role of EX specialist, responsible for orchestrating all employee experience development work, which is then normally done collaboratively with volunteer employees. I have myself been able to use collaboration opportunities with the EX specialist for advancing the thesis, for example in the occasion of the EX workshops described later.

### Research methodology framework

The active phase of development work lasted for a period of 5 months. The work started with some initial preparations where considerable time was invested in prospecting thesis topic, conducting informal conversations with employees and supervisors, participating and facilitating employee experience workshops with a wide range of employees. Such experiences offered the opportunity to gather early data and supported me develop a wider understanding of EX opportunities within the case company. The thesis process is visualized below in Figure 5.

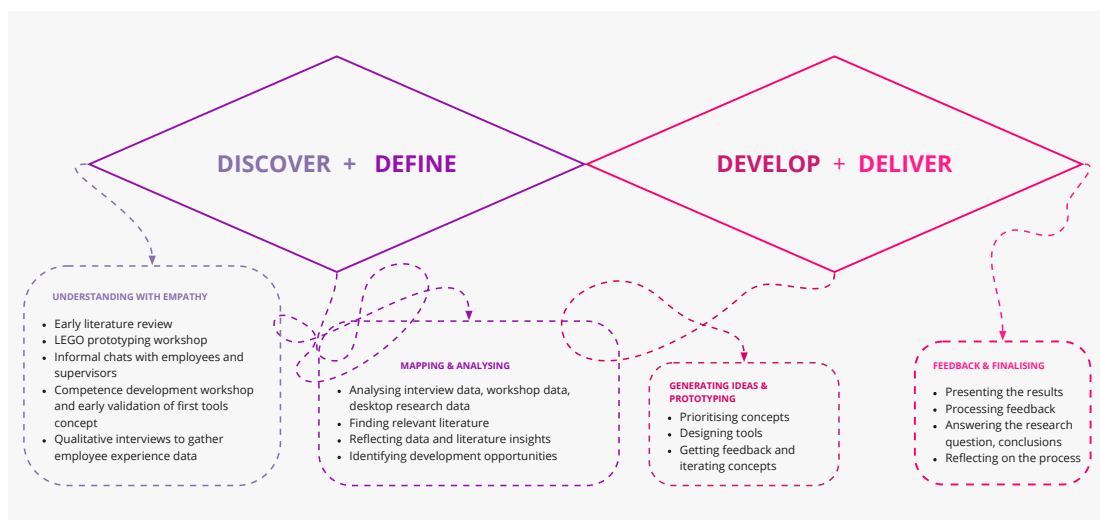


Figure 6: Double Diamond model and thesis process

Service design is a term which counts with a myriad of definitions by different researchers and practitioners. For the context of this thesis, I choose Moritz description which frames service design as a “holistic, multi-disciplinary, integrative field that helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for customers and efficient as well as effective for organizations” (Moritz 2005). The key principles of service design thinking and doing described by Stickdorn & al. (2011):

- **User-centered** experience through the customer’s eyes
- **Co-creative** all stakeholders included in the process

- **Sequencing** experience visualized as a sequence of interrelated actions and time
- **Evidencing** bring awareness to the intangible through physical artefacts
- **Holistic** big picture and entire experience environment in consideration

Service design methodology is also applicable in employee experience design for its holistic approach which considers business, customer and employee perspectives at the same time (Stickdorn et al. 2011). It may be indispensable for redesigning balanced employer-employee relationships since it ensures the human focus in process thinking, thus a relevant process methodology choice for the development of this study.

When it comes to choosing the service design model to follow, one is then faced with a variety of approaches and must identify the more suitable ones according to a project's specific challenge. Popular models are the Stanford D. School model (Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test), British Design Council's Double Diamond model (Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver), IDEO HCD Model (Inspiration, Ideation, Implementation) and IBM Loop model (Observe, Reflect, Make). They all have the same mindset in common, varying just in number of steps and how they are labelled (Stickdorn et al. 2011).

Finally, the methodology framework chosen to conduct this thesis consists of service design methods applied to the Double Diamond model (Figure 5). Developed by the UK Design Council (2005) based off research on creativity and innovation, this model is characterized by a pattern of divergent and convergent thinking arranged in four phases: discovery, definition, development and delivery.

Each phase of the model as well as tools selected in this research are described in theoretical and practical details throughout this chapter. Before going into detail of each phase it's valid to highlight though, in reality, the nature of service design processes is non-linear even though the phases are commonly represented and described as linear steps (Stickdorn et al. 2011).

The process is much more iterative than it seems, and this is especially true within the context of employee experience design. For example, an important insight can become visible at a later stage, or the direction of development might change. I tried to communicate iteration in the visualization represented by Figure 6 drawing the arrows tangled, which makes the process look less straightforward.

#### 4.1 Discover

First step in the Double Diamond process model. This diverging stage is defined by gathering data about service users and challenges they are facing (Stickdorn & al. 2011). The designer

may use qualitative and quantitative research methods to observe and understand people, their context, problems and opportunities.

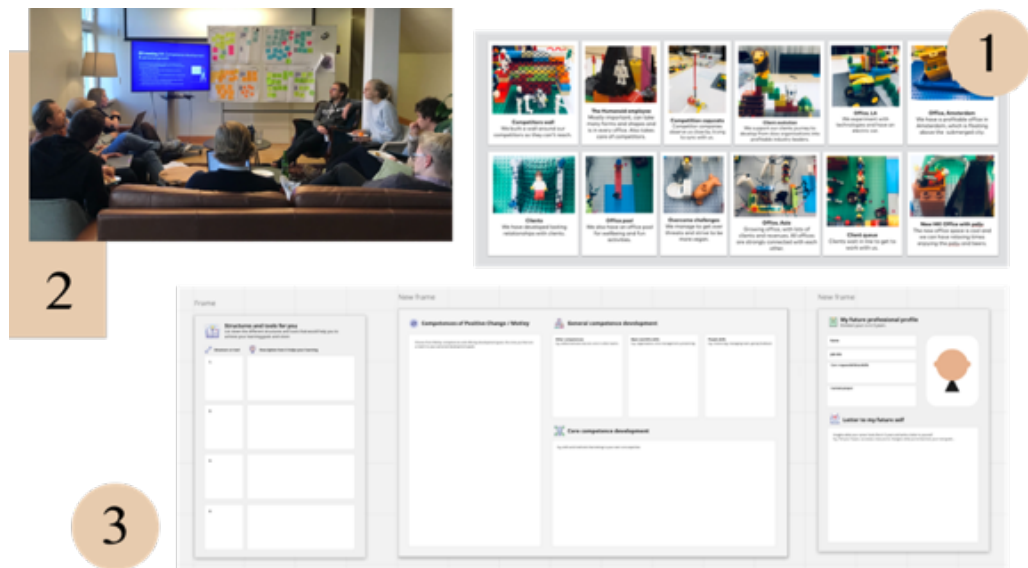


Figure 7: Insights emerged from qualitative data

Patton (2015) establishes that qualitative research must specify units of analysis. Such specification serves to define the primary focus of data collection, and also later inform data analysis decisions. The main unit of analysis in this thesis is employee experiences and perspectives of what happens in personal development. Such data was collected through individual interviews.

Relevant materials such as workshops documentation, employee survey results and qualitative employee feedback provided by the case company were also supportive units of analysis. Such materials supported specifically interview guide formulation and insights generation in data analysis. Full description of methods selected for qualitative data collection are detailed in following pages.

#### 4.1.1 Workshop sessions

Thinking with a design mindset requires open-mindedness and flexibility from the individual (Brown 2009). For people to share experiences and perspectives openly, an environment with positive and enabling atmosphere is needed.

Workshops are a key method in service design to facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders (Stickdorn & al. 2011). This type of meeting session is mainly characterized by the use of boundary objects such as templates, maps and prototypes, to promote discussion and co-creation. Workshops are normally themed sessions, since the narrow focus allows for productive conversations and concrete outcomes.



The thesis has been an opportunity for exploring also my personal interest in the topic of play as a method applied to workplace activities. I have since found workshops to be a suitable method, for example, to question the stigma of play (as something that doesn't belong in the serious world of work) by facilitating management and employees have their own experience and reflect on results achieved through play.

Topic of the session	Objectives	Outcomes	My roles
Workshop 1: Play as a facilitator for organizational and culture change	Build discussion, facilitate a new and hands-on experience,	Participants co-created company vision prototypes using Lego	Planning, facilitation and analysis
Workshop 2: EX & Competence development	Engage employees & supervisors in open discussion, Co-creation	Participants mapped own needs, and structures supporting learning	Analysis
Workshop 3: EX & Personal development	Engage employees & supervisors into open discussion, initial ideas validation	Participants tested initial prototypes of personal development tools	Planning, facilitation and analysis

Table 4: Summary of workshop sessions

A total of three workshop sessions served to identify, build awareness and safe space for discussion of themes that were later explored deeper in employee interviews and literature review. Workshops were open to the whole company and participants included both employees and management.

Workshop 1 was facilitated on the yearly Strategy Day. First part of the session consisted of a presentation summarizing play theory literature, to introduce why and how to use structured play in projects or workplace processes. The case company already demonstrates a playful culture in interpersonal interactions. The objective was to introduce opportunities of play in serious work scenarios.

After the presentation I facilitated a prototype exercise with LEGO. Prototyping is a staple in the service design toolbox, a versatile method used for a wide range of purposes from ideation to validation (Stickdorn & al. 2018). Participants were divided in three teams of ten to fifteen people, and given the task to co-create a 5-year company vision prototype from their perspective.

By the end of the session teams were asked to present their prototypes and were recorded in video. After all teams had presented, participants were asked to share observations about their experience and session feedback. Afterwards, I documented each of the three prototypes in a printable format with images, quotes and shared it within the case company.

Workshop sessions 2 & 3 were complementary sessions in collaboration with the EX specialist as part of her assignment. The objective of both sessions was to create space for employees and team leads to share their needs and map together opportunities related to competences, learning and personal growth. As researcher I had an active role in session 3 collaborating with the planning and creation of templates that were used as boundary objects. Although I had full responsibility only for the first session, the other two sessions were valuable for the research because provided me the initial perspectives to the relevant themes, created a momentum for collaboration with the company and invited also team leads and management perspectives into the discussion.

Together, these sessions provided this thesis with qualitative data which was used in three main ways during the service design process. Firstly, provided support for designing in-depth interview script and boundary objects in Discover phase. Secondly, contributed qualitative data for analysis and insights in Define phase. Thirdly, provided employee feedback to early concepts of personal development tools, which was useful during designing in Develop phase.

#### 4.1.2 Desk research

Desk research is a method used early in qualitative research before field or development work, for gathering understanding of a topic through a variety of data sources (Patton 2015). Such learnings may include getting perspectives of an experience, industry, business, competitor landscape. Data collected with this method consists of documents with enough context to be later analyzed. In service design process, this method is described in two approaches: preparatory research and secondary research. As Stickdorn & al. (2018) frame it, preparatory research is about finding the right questions to ask.

The objective of preparatory research is designer's own preparation before actual research work, in this case the gathering of initial perspectives on personal development within the case company, and the wider context of creative knowledge industry where it is inserted.

The objective of secondary research is to form a theoretical base for the design work, in this case gathering and reviewing existing literature, models of reference and trends related to personal development and research question.



Figure 8: Desk research key focus areas

Desk research in this thesis included both academic and non-academic data collection: documents included scientific publications, industry case studies and reports, organization internal materials, as well as written open-ended responses to employee experience surveys. The data collected from desk research was used to inform interview design and later in Define phase supporting or contrasting interview insights during thematic analysis.

#### 4.1.3 Employee interviews

The third and main method selected for qualitative data collection in this research was in-depth interviews conducted in a semi-structured approach (Patton 2015). The inquiry followed a funnel structure, starting with wider questions to get the participant comfortable with the context of the interview; then becoming detailed with focus on participant's experiences within personal development context. Data produced by this method consists of direct quotes with enough context for analysis phase.

As for its advantages, the open-ended questions and probes used in this method collect in-depth responses about individuals' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. As disadvantages, due to timeframe and resources which are limited in this thesis, in-depth interviews allow only for a small sample of employees, not covering all possible different perspectives as for example a quantitative survey could. Still, according to Stickdorn & al. (2011) semi-structured interviews are a very common method within service design since allows space for deeper understanding and opportunity for extra clarifications.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, designers must follow the interview guide but also be open to follow other directions the participant might take.

Patton (2015) describes a skilled interviewer as someone who should be able to observe how the interview setting can affect what is said and the nuances of interview-interviewee relationship and interaction. Because my interviews aimed to discuss topics on a highly personal level, it was important that participants would be willing and comfortable to share very private thoughts and experiences. I asked myself how one might facilitate comfortable collaboration, especially if they are co-workers (common context of EX design projects).

Play literature was essential support in planning a safe, friendly, inviting interview context for employees. Fullerton & al. (2004) support that a playful approach can be applied to even the most serious or difficult subjects. Also, in the context of the workplace play has been demonstrated to effectively create a safe and friendly ground for collaboration.

Most cases found in literature explored play for collaboration in contexts of the design process such as ideation and prototyping sessions. Since interviews are also a very common qualitative method in the service design process, I identified the upcoming employee interviews as a perfect chance to experiment a little further the potential of play in interview sessions. So, I decided to design a concept for playing instead of conducting employee interviews.

### **Designing and Facilitating a Playful Employee Interview**

Like traditional interviews, the first step was to define my objectives. For this thesis, interview goals were firstly to create a safe space to empathize with employees on a personal level. Then the goal was to gather employee experience qualitative data such as:

- Personal dreams, goals, motivations, mindsets, needs and challenges
- Factors that impact on personal and professional growth
- Strategies and enablers of achievements
- Key experiences & expectations at the workplace
- Feedback on the interview experience

I dedicated special attention to designing the interview in order to avoid bias interference. As for participant recruitment, I emailed the whole company an open invitation to volunteers for individual interviews. Writing the interview invitation, I paid attention it had a very friendly tone and stated clearly the thesis goals, interview objectives and assured anonymity of participation.

I targeted a maximum of ten interviews and the final recruited sample was made of seven volunteers. The sample reached my desired criteria: creative knowledge work employees, representation of all teams within the company, varied expertise, roles and levels of experience. Employees interviewed included four males and three females, which roughly represents gender distribution in the case company.

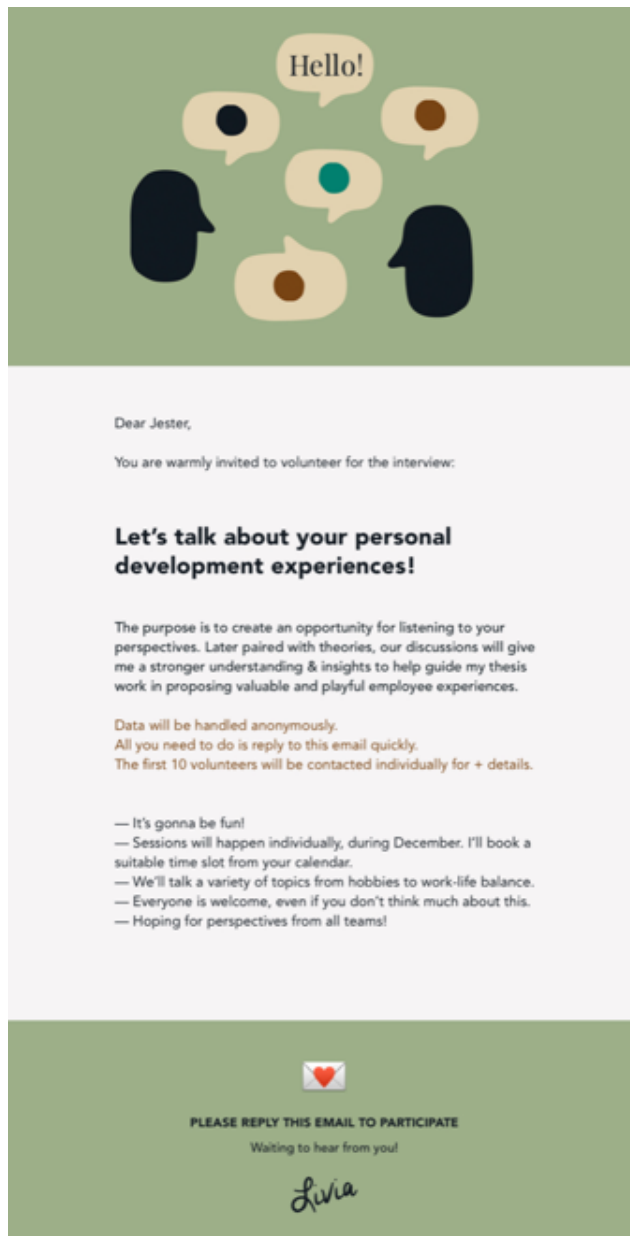


Figure 9: Email sent to employees inviting them to join interviews

After selecting interview methods, defining goals and recruiting participants, the next step was to plan the script. Based on relevant themes drawn from workshops & desk research, I designed sixty open-ended questions and distributed them across five sections. For interviewees to share as much as possible, when designing questions, it was important to

avoid closed ones where answer is simply “yes” or “no” (Stickdorn & al. 2011) and give preference to open-ended questions. Open-ended questions provide participants space to freely structure and express perspectives.

Final questions prompted employees about personal life situation, roles, relationships, motivators, goals, plans, feedback, achievements, rewards, vision of the future, organization culture, personal development process and structures in the workplace and in life. Not all questions were used in interviews (hence the semi-structured approach) the priority focus was to cover all of the topics defined for each interview section, described below in Table 5.

Theme	Example questions	Objective
Humble Beginnings (2 questions)	“Welcome and thanks for volunteering! Our session could have a more informal format. How about we play a game on the floor?”	To warm-up; to inform participant of thesis objectives, practicalities, permissions; introduction of interview’s agenda, space and probes.
Land of Figuring the Self (15 questions)	“What kind of things are important to you? Why?”  “What roles people in your life play for your personal development?”	To empathize and understand life elements role in personal development. Questions are grouped in themes related to employee background, everyday life, wellbeing, family & relationships, motivations, personal aspirations.
Forest of Learning Experiences (25 questions)	“How often do you have 1-1? What are your expectations for those meetings?”  “What do you recognize supports you well, both at work & out of work?”	To understand individual personal development experiences; to identify challenges and enablers.  Questions are grouped in themes: career, goals, plans, challenges, supportive relationships, structures, feedback.
City of Learned Skills (12 questions)	“How does your personal development relate to company needs?”	To understand individual perspectives on personal development impact. Questions grouped in themes such as achievements, recognition,

	“What type of rewards do you value?”	celebration, company culture, perspectives of future self.
Where would you focus your eyes? (5 questions)	“Which area(s) of the map would you prioritize to improve your personal development experience?”	To identify participant’s priorities; perceptions on holistic personal development; feedback on the interview session.

Table 5: Employee interviews guide

Besides the interview script for facilitator support, the playful interview experience I designed included probes for the participants. Using probes or boundary objects is a common method in service design to support mutual understanding and visualize complex systems or experiences, when facilitating in-depth interviews (Stickdorn & al. 2011). Such probes can be simple documents, templates or even take a more tangible form of game element, such as cards, map or figures. Table 6 summarizes the probes designed and included in this thesis.

Probe	Description	Objectives
Interview map or board game	Interview script visualized as a map with icons and playful language, for participant to navigate as a board game.	To give perspective of the interview agenda. To support playful and immersive experience.
Quiz cards	Multiple-choice questions visualized as cards participant encounters along the map.	To encourage participant to navigate the map. To support playful and immersive experience.
Toys	Human figures available for participant to choose a representation of the self on map.	To encourage participant engagement. To support playful and immersive experience.

Sticky notes, eyes stickers, pens	Participant is asked to use pen and sticky notes with eye stickers on them.	To enable participant share priorities and feedback.  To support playful experience.
Stakeholders map	Participant is asked to review the document and identify enablers	To give participants perspective for sharing experiences from life in general
Support structures	Participant is asked to review the document and identify enablers	To give participants perspective for sharing experiences at the workplace

Table 6: Probes used for employee interviews

To be able to facilitate a long discussion around delicate topics and tap into valuable insights it was important to carefully design the interview experience. I carefully selected a private space to conduct the sessions within the case company premises, where there was little to no people traffic.

Long meetings are hardly connected with the concept of enjoyable or playful experience. Since interviews were planned to be held individually as single events lasting for at least 90 minutes, a creative approach was necessary to ensure interviews wouldn't be hard to endure. I transformed the script into a large visual map and engaged participants in a board game instead of a Q & A dynamic. I did also keep a printed copy of interview script with me.

Ideating alternative ideas for our spatial interaction, I quickly opted for abandoning the traditional setup of table and chairs facing each other and created an interview space which was unexpected and positively surprising. I invited them to relax, take off shoes, grab a yoga pillow, a glass of water and join me on the carpet floor, where we sat side-by-side facing our board game and other probes.

A total of seven employee interviews were conducted during a timeframe of one week. For the last minutes of the interview, participants were given the task to prioritize focus areas with a sticky note and open briefly, why these areas are important. Participants were also asked to give feedback on the interview approach. Supervisors remained out of the selection criteria for interviews. The decision was based on the script, since most questions had been designed targeting to understand how employees currently experienced personal development in personal life but also at the workplace. I believe it is important to understand and improve also supervisor experience within personal development processes. However, it



was agreed with the case company that for thesis scope I would focus on employees experiences primarily, while HR would take charge of analyzing processes from talent management perspective at the same time. Interviews analysis is presented in next chapter.

#### 4.2 Define

Second phase of the service design process and first convergent moment in the Double Diamond model. This stage is defined by data analysis, insights and challenge framing (Stickdorn & al. 2011). During this phase, mainly service design and qualitative analysis methods were applied to data in order to understand employee experiences, synthesize patterns and visualize findings.

The outcome of this phase were employee mindsets, a personal development journey map, framed challenges and opportunities which supported guide the concept work described in chapter 4.3.

Analyzing data from qualitative perspective requires from the researcher an interpretative, active and iterative approach (Patton 2015). The most important in qualitative analysis is to apply a method to data and explain the assumptions or decisions that informed the analysis (Clarke & Braun 2006). Thematic analysis was the chosen approach in this thesis and it is considered one of the most foundational methods in qualitative analysis, based on the coding of data and search for patterns or themes (Clarke & Braun 2006). A key advantage in this method is flexibility, while a common challenge can be analysis report clarity. The method allowed me to identify the key themes in the research, which I then used to guide my complementing literature review and ideate solutions.

Company materials and workshops results were already in text format ready for analysis. In order to analyze the seven employee interviews recordings (90-120 min each) I transcribed them in full. According to thematic analysis process described by Patton (2015) the next step was to assign codes to the pieces of data, then identification of similar codes, organization of codes into clusters, and finally identification of themes.

Thematic analysis was in practice processed on a research wall (Stickdorn & al. 2018) which is the service design method for documenting and sharing research data visually. Throughout the thesis I collected all data in a large digital wall using Miro, an online tool for visual collaboration. Since the research was documented on this digital platform, I processed data by copying and pasting it into small blocks, then created codes by assigning tags and colors to the pieces of data.

As the analysis process advanced, coded blocks were arranged on the wall and allowed me to quickly visualize employee needs, pains and expectations forming clusters and themes. This

digital approach allowed me to move quickly from analysis towards the next service design phase, where based on the themes I searched relevant literature for inspiration and ideation of thesis outcomes.

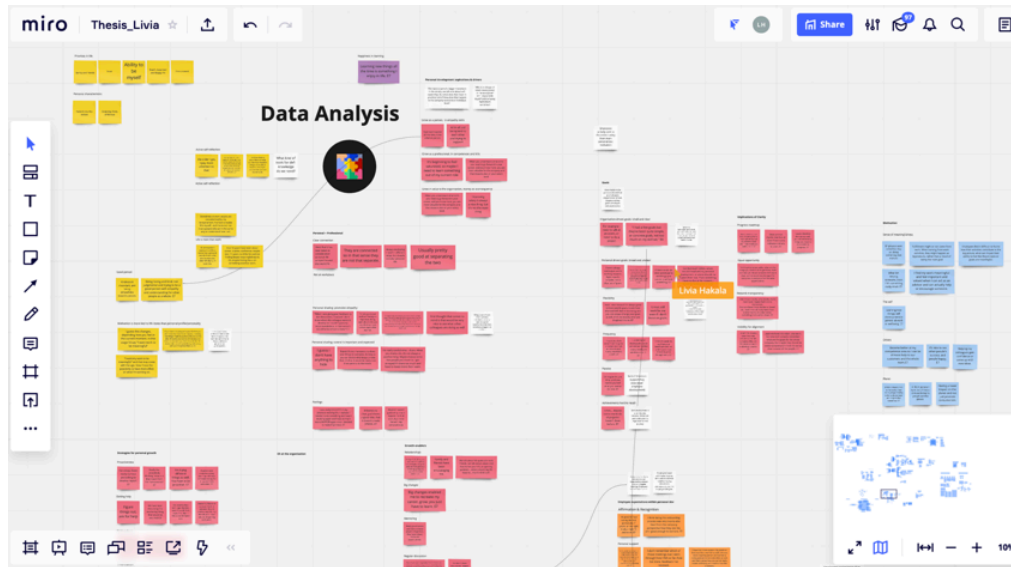


Figure 10: Thematic analysis in progress on the research wall

Stickdorn & al. (2018) suggest a variety of design methods to produce research reports visually appealing and easier for stakeholders to understand. In this thesis I chose to also use customer profile and journey map as design methods which are helpful for providing a more human or empathetic format to data insights.

### Customer profile

In this thesis context, the employee is to be understood by customer or target segment. This profiling does not include supervisors or management. Customer profiling is described as a service design method for supporting the designer to understand and communicate about a targeted segment of people (Stickdorn & al. 2018). Normally the outcome is a visual document in the format of personas or behavioural archetypes.

A persona typically is a representation of a group of people simplified as one person. It includes specific hopes, needs and actions, and it will also include demographics such as age, gender, social status, job role, income, name and other attributes. While the person is fictitious both the story and details must be grounded on research data. Alternatively, customer profiles can be communicated more widely as archetypes. These focus on how different mindsets manifest across behaviours, offering some directions how an employee would think and act.

The objective in this thesis is not to identify different employee personas in terms of what people look like in different teams at the case company. The interest in this study is to identify different patterns of behaviours on how employees reflect their growth journey, motivations and actions, and how their perceptions change over time. Mindsets also give glimpse to how an individual can change throughout life.

### Journey map

Research-based journey map is a synthesizing and visual service design method to communicate what one is trying to achieve, how one tries to achieve it, why one makes the choices and what one experiences while trying to achieve the desired outcome. According to Stickdorn & al. (2018) alternatively, journey maps can be built assumption-based and represent future-state experiences, instead of current-state which is the approach chosen in this research. The purpose of the personal development journey map in this study is to synthesise current-state development experiences at the workplace. The map was also used as support to inform concept decisions during ideating stage. In section 4.2.2 I introduce the map and process how it was built.

#### 4.2.1 Key Findings

With support of direct employee quotes, this section presents ten themes categorizing the insights on personal development experiences resulted from thematic analysis of all qualitative data (Table 7).

Themes		Key insights
1	Employee mindsets	Seeking mindset and reacting mindset
2	A holistic perspective	Personal & professional, trust, support
3	Meaningful personal growth, motivations & rewards	Experiential learning; three levels of impact: global, organizational and social
4	Key role of extra-organizational support	Personal relationships and networks
5	Self-management and other enablers	Proactivity, collaboration, asking for help
6	Perspective and plan in personal development	Clarity, direction, equal opportunity, natural and synthetic happiness

7	Goal meaningfulness and employee alignment	Small goals/targets, big goals/aspirations, clarity, top of mind, team connection
8	The augmented role of supervisors and colleagues	Nurturing, inspiring, leveraging relationships, collaborative support
9	Time and structure	Hectic life, multiple roles, facilitating reflection, time is the key resource
10	Other expectations towards workplace support	Clarity, consistency, feedback, facilitating collaboration, time & financial resources

Table 7: Thematic categorization of findings

### 1. Employee mindsets

Interviews comprised of seven employees of different genders, ages, roles, backgrounds, years of experience and personality types. Two common attributes were observed in all interviews analyzed: ambition to grow and the ability for self-learning. All employees placed personal development as a high priority in life, from both personal and professional aspects. Although displaying ambition and having similar opportunities at the workplace, employees reported distinct levels of satisfaction with own personal development. This indicated something happens between ambitioning and experiencing personal development. I identified key factors setting apart those who declared experiencing personal growth, from ones who felt lagging behind. Such factors were not personality attributes but different behaviors.

Emerging findings allowed me to categorise such behaviours according to two employee mindsets: **Seeking mindset** and **Reacting mindset**. Such mindsets seem to influence directly on employee perception of personal development and are not fixed like personality attributes. Employees reported switching across different motivation factors according to “what life feels like”, and an employee continues framing that “this is not a stable situation; it fluctuates when something feels more important”.

	”Seeking” mindset	”Reacting” mindset
Behavior	Actively engaging extra-organizational resources	Mostly utilizing intra-organizational resources
	Independently searching opportunities	Reacting to presented opportunities

	Focusing on futures	Focusing on the present
	Feeling mostly growing	Feeling mostly stuck

Table 8: Key mindsets and behaviours observed

### Seeking mindset

“It’s very important right now for me to spend time on what’s meaningful to me. I want to develop and learn new things.”

Four employees in this mindset reported a key behaviour: the practice of self-awareness as one of them shares “I constantly reflect something that has happened. I learn from that.” These individuals show a basic ability to identify own strengths, aspirations or needs.

Another key behaviour is the ability to articulate personal development opportunities in highly independent manner. They act independently but in a collaborative manner, actively recruiting others for advisory and support to achieve own goals. These individuals demonstrate strategic thinking which enables them to make efficient use of their personal networks. They report mostly seeking colleagues and also connections from previous work experiences, family and friends as well.

### Reacting mindset

“I have a lot going on in my life, so I want to focus on taking care of my wellbeing and coping with work”

Employees currently in this mindset also demonstrate wish to grow and proven ability to perform and achieve goals. However, learning new skills is a secondary priority at this moment as one states, “Of course you still want to develop, but if you feel stressed then your brain’s capacity is in a limited state”.

Key behaviour observed in this mindset tends to be about keeping performance as opposed to reflecting development opportunities. They mention coping with life events tend to take a lot of their free time and energy. Such life events are described in interviews as relationship challenges, crisis in the family or health issues, for example. A difficulty to describe own dreams or aspirations in both professional and personal life spaces was also observed.

Although skills are indeed gained and goals are achieved, the growth experienced does not necessarily feel meaningful when it lacks self-reflection. These employees reported a stuck feeling with their personal development in and could benefit of more support.

## 2. A holistic perspective

Employees were positive about taking in consideration personal and professional perspectives together, as this is the course how personal development happens in reality “I’m always developing myself in different areas, like at work and also personal life”. When employees enjoy the people, tasks and the workplace, they describe work as a life enabling force. Interviews indicate that in such environment supervisor and closest colleagues are aware of their personal life to a certain degree. However, personal life aspects are not usually part of personal development experiences unless employee and supervisor have a close relationship.

Awareness of personal aspects is welcomed in the workplace and considered important since it directly affects employee behaviours, empathy, performance, as this direct quote illustrates “It’s super important because personal stuff is a huge part of life and it certainly affects you at work if you’re having troubles with the kids or divorce. And to be able to know that is going on, you can be understanding and supporting when others need”. In that sense it would be beneficial to know more about the person”.

Being aware of each other's personal situations is mainly seen as a good opportunity to be of help or support to others: “When I was giving peer feedback for development discussions, I realized I don’t know where the colleague wants to develop so I couldn’t give any recommendations. Although sharing personal life in the workplace can promote empathy & a supportive culture, a common worry identified by employees was the issue of control. “People should be encouraged to share, but still be in charge what they want to share”.

## 3. Meaningful personal growth, motivations & meaningful rewards

With no exception, employees interviewed felt they have been able to grow while working at the case company. It was interesting to understand how exactly personal growth happened, in their perspective. Employees explain growth happens through knowledge sharing, as this example about learning from colleagues “I think we have really good mentoring for our project tasks in our colleagues in the company” and mainly through experiential learning “At the same time I read some books, but biggest learning coming from practices”.

While experiential learning was connected to performing tasks on-the-job that required new skills “I’ve been part of projects where I’ve been exposed to approaches I didn’t know before” many also felt personal growth indirectly, as a by-product of activities that are not specific tasks in the job description “Like doing something extra or nice for someone” as one employee illustrates.

Such “side activities” seem more important to these employees as one would expect. They are mentioned again as source of meaningfulness, when employees were asked to describe

experiences in the search for meaningfulness, at work “Helping someone, even if it’s something really small”. This suggests the organization has still a vacuum to cover in regard to facilitating employees feel meaningfulness and fulfilment directly from work tasks or goals.

Employees have demonstrated a need to fulfill their own values in everyday life. Employees find it more difficult to describe how their activities impact the big picture and find it easier to frame how they have been able to impact other people.

As to their motivations in personal development, employees answered going beyond the professional context:

- **Improving self-worth in the world** when the employee aims to have a larger impact in making the world a better place, to feel and be perceived as a good person. “Being loving and kind, not judgmental and trying to be a better person with empathy and understanding for other people as a whole”.
- **Improving self-worth in the organization** when the employee aims to acquire or develop life skills as well as professional skills in a competence area, as in “it’s beginning to feel saturated, so maybe I need to learn something out of my current role”.
- **Improving self-actualization** when the employee aims to grow so she can better support customers and colleagues, to find work meaningful and to feel important and valued for providing others advice, help or encouragement.

Employee interviews reinforced literature by suggesting that after having achieved a certain level of financial satisfaction, employees were more driven by intrinsic motivation such as personally meaningful goals, instead of rewards such as raises and bonuses. Such financial rewards were not mentioned amongst main drivers for personal development or directly tied to performance (like a promotion or achieving an individual goal). Instead, employees mentioned pay raises in connection with the expectation that it could be discussed transparently and with some frequency. “I expect there’s equality and some transparency how your pay is formed and that would be a discussion we could go through like once a year”.

Rewards are however considered as important in personal development, and according to interviews, meaningful rewards are connected with recognition. Examples mentioned include recognition in form of either more responsibility, credibility, trust, freedom, or simply nice feedback when reaching achievements.

#### 4. Key role of extra-organizational support

As identified earlier in connection with key actions differentiating the employee mindsets, four interviews reported an active behaviour of seeking extra-organizational support for personal development, as one states, “I have a really good network and I don’t have fear to use it”. Such support usually described coming from both personal relations (partners, family, friends, crew) but also from personal networks (ex-colleagues and supervisors, former clients, therapists, mentors).

As employees in consultancy business, they are constantly exposed to several new people daily. Describing specifically the support they get, interviews mention encouragement, perspective, sparring, advice, mentoring and job recommendation, as one illustrates “I have my ‘board of advisors’ for both personal life and professional life, my friends and I have a culture of sparring each other”.

Firstly, this finding indicates that **interpersonal support is considered by employees the crucial enabler of personal growth**. Secondly, the importance attributed by employees to support acquired through relationships outside the workplace suggests that perhaps currently intra-organizational support is not yet enough according to their expectations, as one employee points out: “I’ve been working on it quite freely, so the support from personal development hasn’t been coming from the company really, but more from the relationships”. Employees experience they have gotten more support from their “crew” than the workplace.

#### 5. Self-management and other enablers

When asked to look back at latest goal achievements and identify the most helpful support factors, other peoples’ support has played central role in personal growth. When describing achievements, opportunities have a strong role. Those employees currently experiencing a seeking mindset, approach personal development opportunities by being proactive and accepting risks. As one employee illustrates “I’ve been fearless with opportunities, even if I couldn’t do it. Job first, then I find a way to figure out”. Other examples of proactivity mentioned include being curious, being willing to develop, simply trying different things, volunteer to work on things that are personally interesting and also the practice of self-awareness, thinking what one wants from life.

Employees also mentioned the importance of asking for help for achieving goals “Pretty much getting good people around you and asking for help to figure things out” but only asking for help is not a good motivator for collaboration, it is necessary some “Explaining people why I want to do this and also what they get out of that”.



To promote equal chances of growth to all, the organization can create the conditions for empowering more self-management instead of leaving employees heavily relying on personal connections or passively waiting for the rise of opportunities. Encouraging support, making processes consistent and tools accessible can empower employees to find meaningful goals or opportunities and seek help independently.

## 6. Perspective and plan in personal development

Interviews indicate that most achievement happens organically, as opposed to resulting from strategic planning. Employees experience lacking support for a clear vision how they want to develop themselves, as one illustrates “There’s no holistic ‘where should I head with my personal development’ or ‘where should I be 5 years from now’. That’s something I have no clue at the moment. I should be working on it more”.

Indeed, I could observe employees had difficulty to describe short-term and long-term visions for the self (or another possibility, is that they could have refrained from sharing their visions with me in the interviews). In any way, lacking a practice of self-awareness directly affects one’s ability to see growth perspectives. Not being able to imagine futures consequently makes it hard to set achievable goals. Interviews indicated lack of perspective impairs employee’s ability to take charge of own personal development.

Not surprisingly, employees were not able to describe own personal development plan, as this example “I don’t actually have a development plan. We had development talk, and we discussed about goals. But goals are not the same as a plan. I would definitely find it helpful to have a personal development plan”. In fact, they are not sure what a personal development plan means, they find it a misty term since in their opinion it is talked about, but it does not exist in practice. Employees who mentioned recently having a development discussion with supervisor claimed the plan is not clear, if there is one, they cannot recall.

Most employees interviewed experience a sensation of being stuck without the support: “We have development talks but not much else - we are entirely left on our own regarding personal development, and some are better at dealing with it than others”. Only two of seven employees reported having been able to experience big personal development achievements lately, for example learning a skill one has long dreamed of. The employee might be searching for new direction and what to do next, doing a lot of thinking, and still not really going forward. If the workplace lacks structures that empower employee envisioning and planning own growth, it could actually be at risk of contributing to slowing down talent: “Maybe it’s just time until you realize yourself what you want to learn next”.

Organizations must also avoid the risk of inequality by setting structures that promote equal chances for growth. For instance, employee indicate that career paths were not clear:

“Would be better if it’s more clear what are the things you need to do, so that would also be equal for everyone, to have the same opportunities”.

Drawing from employee experiences, it could be suggested that goals do not substitute a lack of plan. In fact, goals without a plan contribute to a perception that achievements are rather not truly personal. “Without a plan you start doing something, and then you end somewhere but that’s not necessarily the place you had in mind”. That employee may still experience some degree of satisfaction, however the type connected to synthetic happiness that results from accepting positive but unplanned results.

## **7. Goal meaningfulness and employee engagement**

Throughout interviews it was possible to observe how employees assign different meanings to goals. Personal development goals have been described as two different types: small goals and big goals.

Small goals were described as simple or concrete tasks, and easier to recall. More comparable to targets, these were usually not related to skillset or personal interests, however the most common type of goal employees reported. Goal suggestions are usually introduced by a supervisor and while agreeing to commit to them, employees do not acknowledge such goals as their own. Goals are perceived in disconnection with personal development, as framed on one occasion, “I don’t think it is goals but company targets, which I don’t relate to. I don’t think they are my goals”.

On the other hand, by big goals employees meant those more personal and aspirational, also related to skills and dreams. However, employees had difficulty framing their current big goals or recalling examples discussed at the workplace. Lack of clarity was the key characteristic of these goals, mentioned by many interviews. Too broad and undefined are characteristics which consistently undermine goal achievement, “We set goals at latest development talk. What were those goals? I have even to memorize myself...”.

Meaningful goals have been mentioned as drivers for higher engagement. Goals must be perceived by employees as personal to feel meaningful, and for that they must be crafted together instead of being offered. Ultimately and over time, such experiences may affect employee perception of future within the organization, “my personal interests are partly related to work, but I’m not sure would I have been able to use such skills here, I haven’t had the chance so far. Without that it’s hard for employee to see a career progression within a company”. Employees want their goals & company goals to contribute to each other, so challenges relating to goals and perspective can also hinder engagement and retention.

The frequency of being exposed to team perspectives seem to play a role in empowering employees “I understand team goals because we see each other every week and we discuss stuff, and I try to see where I fit in that”. But sometimes, on a higher organization level, the big picture is not detailed enough for employee to be able to see connections, “Yeah we have this vision, you see it but you don’t actually remember what are the goals for the whole company. I think it’s not so clear to most of the people”. Organizations must be able to frame the big picture in detail level, so the employee can feel like their goals are meaningful both ways and see how they can contribute and support employee engagement as one employee opens, “I feel that if there would be an actual personal plan, made together with the company, that would make me feel more invested”.

It is possible to conclude that for employees to be at their best, they need to develop both inner perspective and the wide perspective how they are part of a bigger thing. Without perspective, employees find it difficult to connect goals to meaningful personal development. They also find it difficult to see their goals impacting the organization. A way to close that gap can be to define together direct collaborations between personal goals and team goals.

#### **8. The augmented role of supervisors and colleagues**

Supervisors are an important link in nurturing alignment between employees and the organization. How they make use of organization resources and practices, and their relationship plays a crucial role in employee experiences. Employees recall good bosses as those who played a mentor role, and attribute to them a crucial role in inspiring and helping them see opportunities: “I’ve been very lucky I’ve had really good supervisors, even when I didn’t have the skills they have seen my potential and given me chances”. When one employee says “I think we have really good mentoring for our project tasks in our colleagues in the company” it makes tangible the existing potential of people resources within the organization. A more collaborative approach to personal development could expand support beyond supervisor, and actively leverage colleagues support not only for performing project work goals, but also for achieving personal development goals.

#### **9. Structure and time**

The employee wishes to be a reliable colleague, a competent consultation provider, an involved parent, a devoted relative, a decent person in the world. However, in practice it is hard to achieve all goals. Interviews bring up that despite work tasks being increasingly automated and digitalized, life and work can still feel hectic making it hard for many to encounter time for reflection, planning and pursuing the better versions of the self. Interviews where reflection was identified as a less frequent activity, also mentioned that time is the number one resource they lack.

When everything competes for an individual's time, and day-to-day work is a priority, personal development moves to the back of the head waiting for "free time" and the employee sets on a reactive mindset. Personal development processes, to be considered truly empowering, must ensure schedule and time of personal development processes. "It is frustrating to come up with new things to develop, if then nobody has time to actually start working on those".

### **10. Other expectations towards workplace support**

According to employees, more support from the company could directly impact personal growth in a positive way. In order to identify what currently best supports personal growth, employees reviewed a document listing all processes and resources available at the case company. Existing resources more often mentioned as helpful were the training budget, knowledge sharing sessions, and the new employee onboarding process. From one employee's own words it is possible to grasp the importance of feedback: "I think in the onboarding process it was very nice to also hear from the company perspective, how they see me".

Many reported EX processes in general useful. According to employees, clarity and consistency added by processes shift the focus away from people themselves and biases. One employee illustrates, "Processes for giving feedback remove the personal level, suddenly it's not anymore me being mean". Another one approaches the importance of process from the perspective of recognition and rewards. Employees expect they can agree with a supervisor about what needs to be done or what is expected of them, to get a reward, "I don't know how 'Employee of the Month' works, who decides it and how it goes. Maybe that's not so transparent how these things are decided or based on". From these examples we could conclude that employees expect, and would benefit of, clearer structures and process around personal development.

Employees need affirmation, and to be able to grasp expectations towards them, during their onboarding journey to know if one is on the right track. The need to follow-up on progress, and the need to understand expectations, continue across the employee life cycle. These needs should be also addressed on personal development processes, creating opportunities for connection and for employees to be listened to, as one suggests "I've been sparring more with others, but sharing more time with supervisor could improve the relationship".

Overall, I could observe a pattern where structures which enabled two-way collaboration were the highest regarded by employees. All employees agreed on the common expectation of more facilitation around personal development.

#### 4.2.2 Framing the opportunity

The map below synthesizes opportunities in the shape of an employee journey based on what I learned about personal development journey from employee perspectives and literature. The map was built layer by layer starting with the definition of the main actor (employee) and the specific experience (personal development). Next, the main structure of the map is formed with the stages I identified as the key moments in the employee journey: goal setting, crafting a personal development plan, envisioning own futures, defining actions towards goal achievement, and recognizing success. The onboarding stage shows up on the map because it has been brought up in connection with development journey by employees who recently joined the case company. However, this is not going to be considered an opportunity area in the thesis since it has been recently redesigned.

Perception of quality of an experience is directly influenced by employee's expectations and needs being satisfied (Polaine & al. 2013). Therefore, besides the objectives of each stage, the map was also enriched with the addition of the expectations lane, which include the main struggles identified in each stage of the journey, conveyed from a positive perspective as expectations.

Lastly, adding the emotions lane in the journey with emoji and employee direct helps identify key priority areas at a glance. Including emotional data in redesigning employee experiences is a crucial step away from being centred around workplace needs and processes, instead towards an approach where the employee is empowered and true protagonist (Plaskoff 2017).







Stages					
ONBOARDING	REFLECTION	PLANNING	ACTION	SHARING	CELEBRATION
<b>Jobs</b> <b>Learn the organisation</b>	<b>Develop own perspectives</b>	<b>Trace roadmap from vision to plan</b>	<b>Define concrete goals &amp; actions</b>	<b>Seek support</b>	<b>Reflect on learnings</b>
<b>Expectations</b> Employee gets acquainted with company vision, goals, practices, culture & people	Employee envisions own futures, identifies motivators, blockers and support forces with self-reflection and feedback.	Employee unpacks visions of future into a map of both dreams ,and goals that feel personal.	Employee crafts well defined & achievable goals with concrete actions. Follows-up progress.	Employee discusses own journey, goal actions, interests, motivators openly. Enlists support.	Employee gets a sense of progress and achievement. Reflection helps learn which strategies work best.
<b>Challenges</b> <b>Well planned &amp; supported process</b>	<b>Lack of time, low self-awareness</b>	<b>Lack of time, low self-awareness</b>	<b>Lack alignment/ support</b>	<b>Lack of transparency</b>	<b>Lack of time/ opportunities</b>
					

Figure 11: Simplified journey map

### Key steps in personal development journey

- **Reflection** How might I deepen self-awareness?
- **Planning** How might I define and achieve future visions?
- **Action** How might I set clear and meaningful goals?
- **Collaboration** How might I share goals and get support?
- **Celebration** How might I get the sense of progress and achievement?

Based on insights from literature and qualitative data I identified key personal development enablers and outlined a set of design drivers to guide me designing every piece of the concept. As defined by the UK Design Council, design drivers are the principles that provide direction to support decision-making and designing solutions after a challenge is defined.

### Design drivers

- **Structured** The concept should add clarity & structure to interpersonal collaboration (as in clearly defined agenda, roles, plans, goals), create more dedicated time for employee support.
- **Collaborative** The concept should explore possibilities for interpersonal support, facilitate feedback, alignment and support between employee and organization.
- **Visual** The concept should enable clarity, support vision and perspective, keep goals top of mind, give sense of progress
- **Playful** The concept should explore play principles for engagement and facilitating feedback

### A team approach to personal development

Personal development is a highly personal journey, thus should not be based on plans, goals and actions pre-designed as one-fits-all approach. While it is good to have suggestions and inspiration, they should be more of a reference for discussion together with employee. Although highly personal journey, the employee should not be left by oneself to figure it out either. Employees already mention personal networks as crucial support, and such evidence made me see co-design as an opportunity for a fresher personal development approach.

Defined as a creative cooperation during a design process (Sanders & Stappers 2008), co-design is a well-established approach in service design. Its main principle is the combination of diverse perspectives cooperating creatively (e.g., business representatives, researchers, designers, developers, users). Co-design is already a staple approach in service design projects around employee experience (Steen & al. 2011). Due to the productive combination of the different perspectives, I believe co-design could be fit for employee driven personal

development approach, proposing a wider collaboration aspect to personal development which traditionally involves employee and supervisor as main actors.

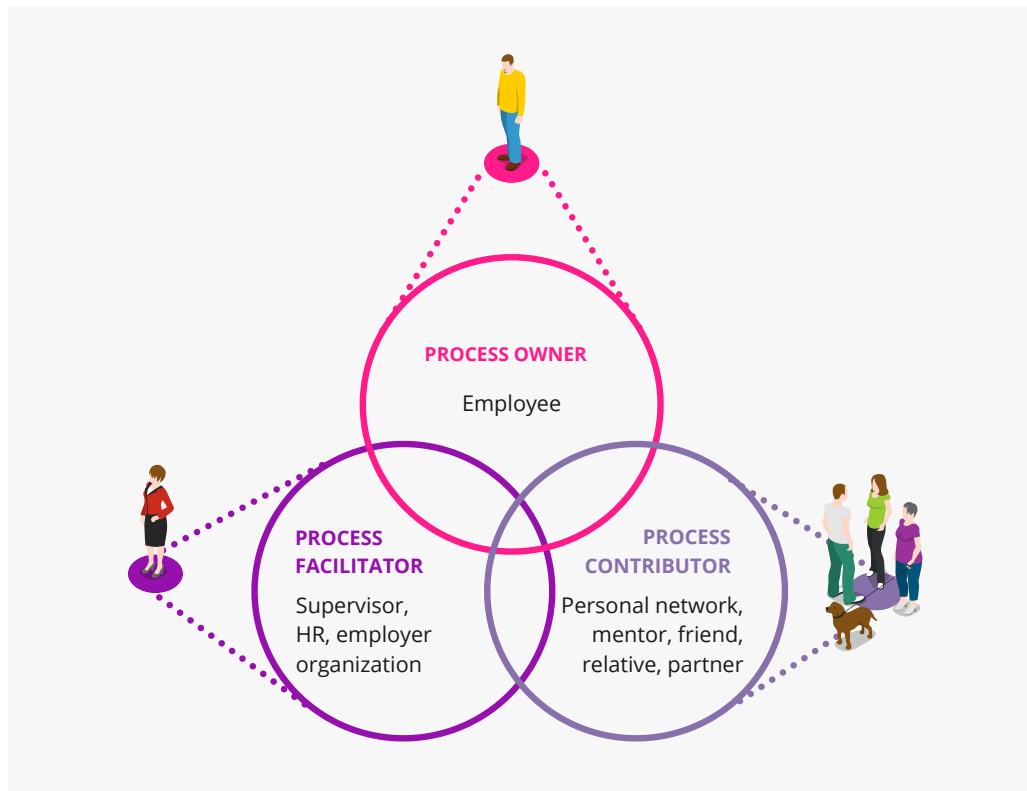


Figure 12. Collaborative model for personal development

- **Employee (Process owner)** Pro-activity and decision-making
- **Workplace supervisor (Facilitator)** Inspiring and orchestrating support
- **Personal board of advisors (Contributors)** Providing support, internal and external to the workplace organization

Personal development facilitated by co-design is a suggestion of collaboration with the employee owning the process while other actors actively participate in a role of process facilitators. Introducing co-design to the personal development process is also about bringing employees, organizations and the community together for wider perspective of paths and opportunities, and ultimately more holistic personal growth.

In practice, new responsibilities would mean the employee turn into own growth manager; throughout the growth journey (ideation, planning and execution). Workplace supervisor would turn into growth facilitator by leveraging their wider perspective and dedicating time to support the employee concretize their visions and improve goals achievability. Goals would be shared with a wide community of contributors (relative, friend, colleague, ex-colleague,

mentor) that get involved in the journey with a role of collaborate with the employee for completing actions towards goal achievement.

Immediate benefits	Long-term benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation of better ideas with a high degree of originality and customer value</li> <li>• Improved knowledge of customer needs</li> <li>• Immediate validation of ideas or concepts</li> <li>• Higher quality, better differentiated products or services</li> <li>• More efficient decision making</li> <li>• Lower development costs and reduced development time</li> <li>• Better cooperation between different people or organizations, and across disciplines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher degrees of satisfaction and loyalty from customers</li> <li>• Increased levels of support and enthusiasm for innovation and change</li> <li>• Better relationships between the service provider and customers</li> </ul>

Table 9. Summarizing co-design value in customer experience, based on Steen & al. (2011)

Involving multiple stakeholders throughout the personal development process (or any process for that matter) can be challenging, but it has the potential for leading to more meaningful outcomes. The table above lists a number of benefits of co-design based on observations within processes, services and experiences in customer context (Steen & al. 2011). It is easy to transport such benefits to the context of employee experiences, which is the focus of this thesis. Besides the aforementioned benefits, a more collaborative approach can lead organizations to better promote employee alignment and retention too.

#### 4.3 Develop

The third step and second divergent moment in the service design process. Develop phase is dedicated to ideating solutions through visualizations and prototypes. In the journey for potential solutions this phase, especially, is defined by intense iteration (Stickdorn & al. 2018).



In this chapter I describe the process of designing solutions that target the identified opportunities and are consistent with the defined design drivers. During this stage the goal was to make solutions tangible as early as possible in the form of prototypes.

### **Defining Format & Visual style**

My first step was to decide a format for the collaborative concept I was going to develop. In current personal development experiences, which are not perceived as very collaborative, employees report the discussion with supervisor is usually facilitated orally. Conversation notes are documented by the supervisor on a digital file which is also owned by the supervisor. What becomes the employee's personal development "plan" is later shared to the employee, or sometimes not.

"Toolkits are used to follow a more deliberate and steered process of facilitation, participation, reflection, delving for deeper layers in the past, making understanding explicit, discussing these, and bridging visions, ideas and concepts [scenarios] for the future." (Sanders & Stappers 2008)

Drawing from my own experience as a designer, I am familiar with toolkit templates as efficient boundary objects for facilitating collaboration. Different types of visualizations such as roadmaps and toolkit templates are used in the service design process to support shared understanding and development of ideas between collaborators with perspectives on different levels like designers and non-designers. Furthermore, toolkits were identified as a prominent choice within co-design literature, according to which toolkits are good vehicles for observation, reflection, interpretation, discussion, expression, and making sense of the future (Sanders & Stappers 2008).

After setting the brief to prototype a toolkit for use in personal development context at the workplace, the next step was to define format as well as look & feel (a visual concept) of the tools to be prototyped. That process started with a benchmarking of existing tools for personal development. Results found were in the format of printable templates, canvases and card decks. Curiously, once image search resulted in a concept named Personal Preference Kit (PPK). Rather than a set of templates for personal development, this kit was indeed a small fabric bag measuring about 20 cmx12 cm, introduced by NASA for astronauts to carry personal items during their journey on space shuttle flights, like a tiny luggage. The thematic of space travel combined with the very personal aspect of a PPK, became inspiration for the toolkit's visual concept. I liked how themes such as journey, universe and the "the unknown" fit the context of personal growth in a concrete way, also opening opportunity for exploring the thematic visually.

I used visual elements like icons and colors, and playful language across the templates. The icons have been downloaded from Flaticon, a large online database of free customizable icons under a license of free usage for non-commercial purposes. The purpose of using visual elements was to make the content easy to glance, relate and recall, and playful.



Figure 13. Visually connecting space journey and personal growth journey

### Prototyping the tools

I set out to design at least one canvas template for each step of the employee journey, which I named as stations (from the space thematic, an allusion to spatial stations). Each design is unique and original in both format and content. They were prototyped from scratch thus are not modifications of existing tools. Having said that, every question or instruction in the prototypes was crafted based on data insights acquired throughout the process, both from literature and qualitative data analysis.

Furthermore, tools were prototyped with close attention to their purposes on each stage in the journey, being thus different, but also forming a congruent set where all of them follow the overall design drivers & visual style defined for the concept.

Journey step	Purpose	Tool
Reflection Station	How might I deepen self-awareness?	My Universe canvas
		Feedback cards

Planning Station	How might I define future visions?	My Journey Plan canvas
Action Station	How might I set clear & meaningful goals?	My Next Planet canvas
Sharing Station	How might I share goals and get support?	My Sneak peek canvas
Celebrations Station	How might I get the sense of progress and achievement?	My Achievements Board canvas

Table 10. Structure of the Personal Universe kit

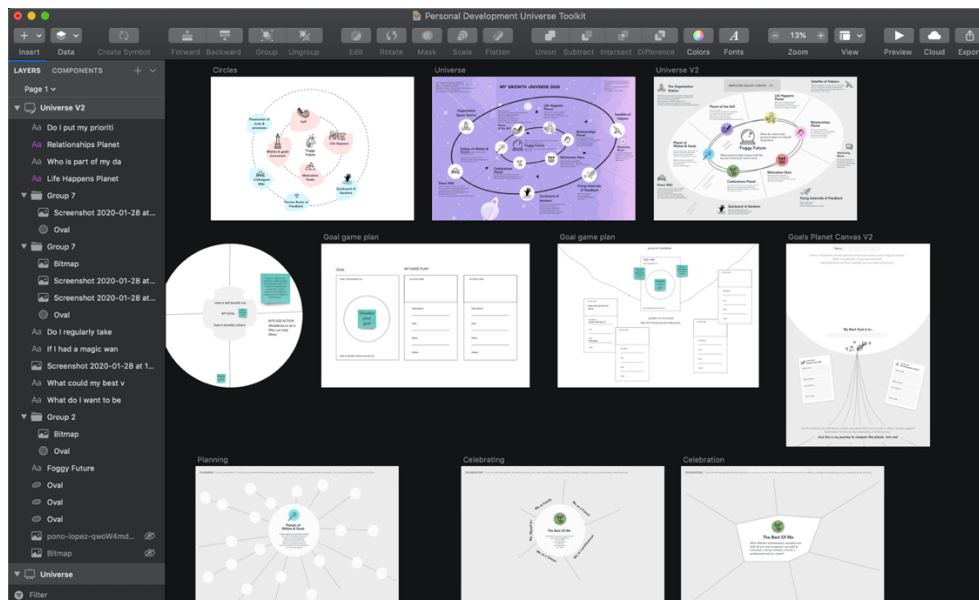


Figure 14. Prototyping work in progress

I started by the first step of the journey, Reflection Station, creating a template to invite to the practice of reflection and facilitate self-awareness. My Universe template contains many guiding questions, formulated from the employee interview guide and also from literature review. These questions for reflection were initially organized according to 7 categories referred to as “galaxies”.

- **Foggy Futures** reflection on short-term & long-term vision
- **Galaxy of the Self** inner thoughts, wellbeing
- **Life Happens Galaxy** reflection on social roles: family, friendships, etc.
- **Relationship Galaxy** reflection on own role as a partner
- **Motivations Galaxy** motivation drivers and killers
- **Celebrations Galaxy** expectations, achievements, rewards
- **Galaxy of Career and Skills** roles, competences

Support-related questions were grouped in 4 categories:

- **The Workplace station** available support from organization structures
- **Peers Wiki** available support from colleagues
- **Asteroids of Feedback** feedback received and reaction to it
- **Satellites of Helpers** other external supports

After one round of review with the case company EX specialist, the Career & Skills galaxy was separated into two, to add more focus for reflection about professional roles and aspirations in Work life & Career galaxy, and the Galaxy of Skills & Competences (technical skills, people skills, etc.). Each reflection category was assigned an icon that visually describes the nature of the topic, and a freely assigned color.

Next, I prototyped two tools to facilitate goal setting. In Planning Station, the template facilitates employee and supervisor collect goals into a personal development map. In Action Station the tool comprises of straightforward instructions for making goals as achievable as possible: a vision statement, achievement visualization, and detailed actions to commit towards achievement.

To support collaboration for achieving goals in Sharing Station, I prototyped a tool that employees can use to share their goals and recruit collaborators. My Universe Sneak peek template basically creates dedicated space for individual's key professional and personal information, so that she can be understood holistically. For Celebration Station I prototyped a moodboard template that employees can fill in with pictures of their achievements and rewards, to support reflection and perception of personal growth.

After sketching the first version of each tool I shared it with the EX specialist with the objective to validate if the first prototype was clear and usable. A few employees and friends were informally involved. Based on feedback, the biggest iterations to the concept were (1) revisiting My Universe template to simplify self-reflection questions (2) creating the Feedback Cards to facilitate more effective feedback, with guiding questions which are based on literature.

#### 4.4 Deliver

Fourth and last step of the Double Diamond model. Deliver is the stage when the concept solutions are implemented and tested against customer needs and expectations, business viability and technical feasibility (Stickdorn & al. 2011). In the scope of this thesis however, this stage of the process will focus solely on presenting solutions to the case company and getting feedback.

The research outcomes and the toolkit developed were delivered and presented to the case company in two online video sessions on Microsoft Teams communication platform. The first meeting was open to all employees and focused on sharing the toolkit as main research outcome. The wider audience in the company was firstly introduced to the research goals and then to the tools, which was presented in full detail template by template, including instructions and tips for employees how to use them independently or collaboratively.

The second was a smaller, closed session attended only by management, team supervisors, HR manager and the EX specialist. This session's objective was to share key research results and suggestions how the tools could be implemented to improve the existing personal development process. I focused on presenting the challenges uncovered in how employees currently experience personal development processes, as well as opportunities how each tool may help the organization provide employees the support they need or expect.

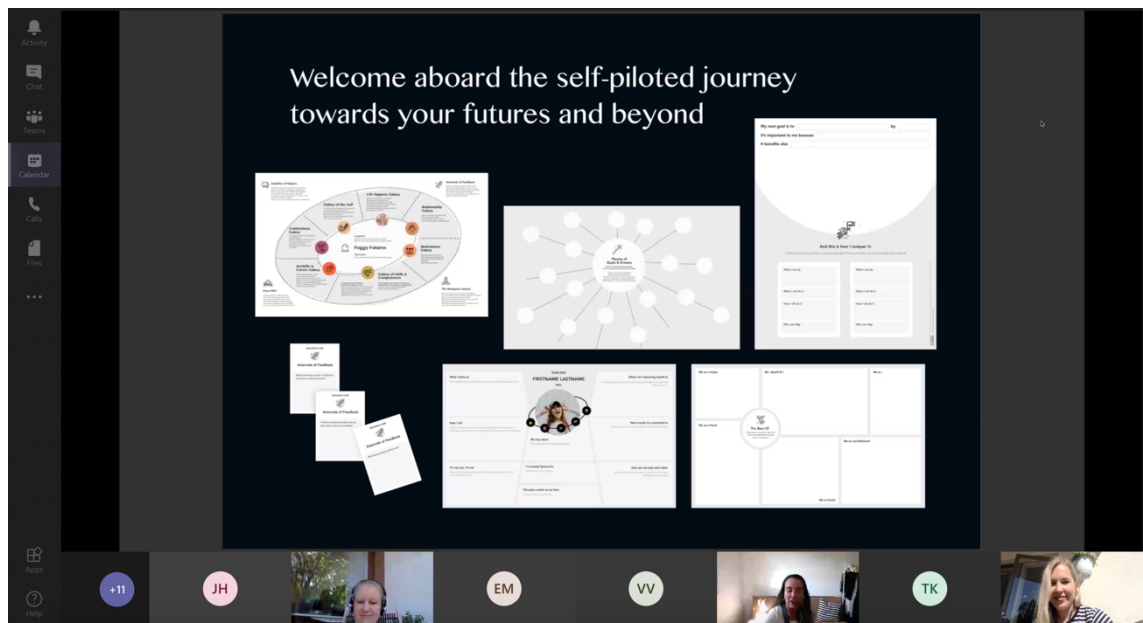


Figure 15. Presenting thesis outcomes

According to Stickdorn & al. (2011) sharing research outcomes with participants and asking their feedback makes them feel well-represented and is good practice to increase project buy-in. The sessions gave employees (including supervisors) a chance to ask questions about the research, share their first impressions and thoughts the tools brought up.

Receptivity was positive across the case company. Employees showed interest to try the toolkit, and supervisors especially saw value in the Reflection tool, for providing a basis for getting to know employees holistically. HR and EX specialists were satisfied with the toolkit outcome, and believe that if employees and supervisors adopt them into use the tools will really help the company forward with Employee Experience in many ways.

Detailed feedback after experiencing the tools remained out of scope framed in chapter 1, however within a few months after the delivery of the toolkit I did collaborate as case company prepared implementation. I supported the EX specialist as she updated the process based on the Personal Universe kit and created a cheat sheet guide with instructions for supervisors. Employees were invited to share their impressions on the new personal development process and any specific feedback, what still needs development. Although early impressions feedback may feel superficial, it is still valuable since it can map receptivity and enable organizations, for example, to anticipate need for iterations.

#### Feelings about the presented process



#### Thoughts about the presented process



Figure 16. Feedback on new personal development process and tools, case company 2020

Based on feedback of nine employees, impressions were again positive and indicate that the toolkit may create value for the employee experience. As for further development, suggestions included focusing still more on "developing together instead of alone" for more motivation and making some steps optional or a lighter version. As for future actions, once the ongoing implementation of the new process is fully piloted, employees and supervisors will have the chance through an employee survey to evaluate the tools and the experience.

## 5 Results

In this chapter I articulate research insights with literature presenting answers to the research question. I outline the identified key elements indispensable at the workplace for empowering employee driven personal development, and results of applying service design methodology and play principles for designing employee experiences and tools. Finally, I introduce the main outcome and final concept delivered to the case company: a toolkit for empowering employee ownership of personal development.

## Answering the Research Question

### **RQ: How might play be used in designing more employee driven personal development experiences?**

A motivated and qualified workforce is essential for any company that wants to increase productivity and customer satisfaction (Deloitte 2018). From organizational perspective, the main objective within personal development is to utilize employees at their full potential (Dobre 2013). But the purpose of personal development from employee perspective is to continually find ways to improve oneself to achieve self-actualization or simply feel happier. Employees also frame the possibility to make positive impact onto the world and people as a strong purpose.

It was presented earlier as personal development drivers that while employees might be intrinsically motivated to be better at work, they are also consciously seeking to do more of the things that matter to them. Since people spend more than half of their lives at work (West et al. 2017) they want to bring to their busy day a little more of who they really are.

Based on employee perceptions, in order to experience continuous and meaningful growth they would need more support from the workplace, especially in terms of dedicated time and collaborative support. Different life events, mindsets and behaviours impact directly on employee ability for self-managing personal growth. It became clear that employees would value not only more empowering practices, but also clear structured process with dedicated, scheduled time for personal development.

Taking ownership of personal development by shaping own path increases employees' chances to fulfill personal values and experience more joy, meaning and balance in everyday life (Drucker 2008). On the other hand, having just personal development tools but no process, no dedicated time to work on it, would mostly add stress, frustration and anxiety instead of value, as one employee states "If there wouldn't be any specific time to work on goals, then it would create extra stress".

From employee interviews we could observe that pre-defined goals inhibit employees from perceiving them as personal and meaningful. In fact, such goals are referred to as targets or business goals. Similar has been observed by researchers when employees described the same work tasks differently, depending on how they defined their own jobs. West et al. (2017) suggests that having a chance to craft own goals or tasks at work might support employees find ways to make the work matter more on a personal level.

While behavioral psychology research supports that relationships are a key enabling factor in human development from childhood to adulthood, interviews also indicate that support from people both inside and outside the workplace is a key enabler of goal achievement.

As introduced by literature alignment doesn't happen by itself, but it must be nurtured. When employees see connection between the organization values and their own, it can positively impact employee commitment (Collings & Mellahi 2009). Interviews reinforced this knowledge, suggesting that an alignment of organization and personal development goals may also affect retention. Like any relationship, also an employee has more ability to see long-term commitment with an organization that supports her personal growth.

In order to answer the research question, I used service design framework to identify what **employee driven** could mean in practice, understand the opportunities and develop solutions. Answers can be found below as I introduce the outcomes of the research as (1) identified key elements for an employee driven personal experience, (2) how play can contribute for supportive environment and processes at the workplace, and (3) tangible tools for facilitating employee empowerment in personal development.

### 5.1 Key Principles for Employee Driven Personal Development



Figure 17. Empowering employee growth

- **Perspective & Awareness**

Employees need help developing ability to see perspectives, articulate and envision futures, long-term and short-term. Besides own personal networks, the workplace organization can



take a more present role supporting this. Individuals also value organizations which facilitate growth personal and professional, short-term (current role goals) and long-term (career goals). But to achieve it, drawing from Drucker's observations (2008) the employee must be able to clearly see own present and envision own futures first.

Since self-awareness is identified as a crucial enabler for personal development, the workplace must provide structure in shape of time and tools. The Reflection Station templates encourage employees to regularly reflect own thoughts, clarify own dreams and learn to identify less obvious opportunities. It is also important to offer structure to incentive low effort and continuous feedback within the workplace. The Feedback Cards tool offers a playful format and structure (introduced by readily defined questions) that can facilitate communication by removing ambiguity and creating a safer space as employees feel it removes the commonly perceived negative aspect from feedback.

- **Meaningful plans & goals**

Findings indicated goals must always be personal to be meaningful, even when they're work goals, otherwise motivation is not intrinsic and does not last. Employee driven goal setting, as well as alignment of goals with the team or organization, are key enablers for goal achievement. If a team has goals nobody feels personally committed to own, then there is probably something wrong with the values or the vision. Besides minding alignment, the workplace must trust the employee responsibility and provide practical tools to support one in clarifying own dreams/aspirations.

The Planning Station in the toolkit was developed specifically to offer this practical support. This template also encourages employee and organization to collaboratively explore connections between personal goals and opportunities within team goals. The holistic understanding how one can contribute to another's aspirations also nurtures alignment. Insights support the importance of looking at the employee as a complex entity with both personal and professional self-concepts. Deeper empathy helps the workplace identify employee mindsets and enable personal growth despite the impact of live events.

My Universe template was also developed as a tool to facilitate employee and supervisor connect in empathy and more personal understanding. As results it can hopefully ensure the right support at the right moment needed, and ultimately nurture alignment between employee and team or the wide organization.

- **Support for action & reflection**

Employees can benefit of both: self-managing the journey, and managers that know how to support. Thus, the workplace must aim to empower employees manage their personal

development, as well as explore how to provide facilitation for progress and arrange opportunity for celebration. Being able to recall goals achieved was found crucial for employee perception of personal growth. The very reflection of achievements contributes to the feeling of progress and vice versa; the lack of it impairs such perception, as observed through employee interviews. Visual methods are found to be efficiently used for making achievements visible and top of mind. Furthermore, visual documentation of growth progress can be used as one of the methods to assist supervisors evaluate performance and facilitate recognition and rewards planning.

## 5.2 A Role for Play in Employee Experiences



Figure 18. Play-based workshop

Throughout this research I explored play as a method for facilitating employee experiences. I was interested to observe how the benefits of play could support employee interviews.

- **Facilitating safe space and positive mindset**

Among various benefits indicated in literature, play allows employees to imagine futures with less fear, with a lighter adventurous perspective where no solution seems impossible or ridiculous. By facilitating a positive mindset when approaching challenges, play can be very valuable in the workplace, boosting individuals focus on possibilities and instead of problems (West & al. 2017).

- **Facilitating structure and solution-oriented mindset**

Collaboration is a key factor for work meaningfulness in employees' perspective. Play creates the perfect space for deeper relationships (Sutton-Smith 1997) playing together individuals are complementing or building upon each other's ideas, practicing important collaborative skills like listening and teamwork. Structure and rules which characterize structured play can be valuable for the workplace by making collaboration simpler, like processes, but connecting people through positive memories or experiences that typically result from fun together.

First a co-creation workshop was conducted with LSP method and as results observed, I could validate that by using a playful tool employees were able to not only perform a work task, but also reported experiencing fun collaborating together on the task. Employees mentioned that by working with LEGO they felt allowed to voice crazy ideas without caring to sound stupid, since the whole exercise was perceived as a game. Participants also reported feeling more creative and energized by performing in a different way a task they are so used to perform in their roles within client projects. This was a new method for many of them and was received as a learning experience. Beyond these, play was also an efficient method to measure how aligned employees were across the different teams and management, in relation to company vision. Months later, management took seriously a few concepts suggested by employees through play and implemented them in the organization.

Qualitative interviews with employees were performed using a board game play session as a format, receiving only positive feedback from all seven employees. As a key result, the approach successfully helped me reach interview objectives, one being the objective to create an environment to support openness and trust. According to employees, the play format helped them feel more comfortable than usual interviews, and the visual and interactive approach also facilitated them organize their thoughts by giving a clear perspective to the context of the interview. Because the board game visualized the whole interview agenda, employees felt they were able to see the different topics more clearly and how they connected to each other, showing a perspective they haven't been able to have before.

Like similar results compared from literature (Vaajakalio & al. 2018; Mekky & Lucero 2016; Blair & Rillo 2016) I was able to validate how introducing play was proved to be an easy and low-cost method for creating a structured, safe, positive, solution-oriented environment for employee experiences.

### 5.3 Personal Universe Kit

Informed by the theoretical framework, qualitative data insights and iterative feedback, the final toolkit comprises of 6 original tools for personal development in the format of 5 canvas templates and 1 deck of cards. It can be found attached in Appendix 1 together with full instructions how to play with each tool.

The whole concept was designed to be a flexible resource, meaning that a series of steps is suggested but not required, so employees and organizations may choose to use to play with all the tools or only some of them. It may be used autonomously or collaboratively for a wider perspective to self-awareness, be it with intra-organizational resources (like colleagues and supervisors) and/or extra-organizational resources (such as a mentor, close friends, relatives). The tools may be used printed or used digitally. For using the toolkit printed, it is recommended to use sticky notes or a journal for annotations. For using it digitally, it is recommended to save notes on a digital document.

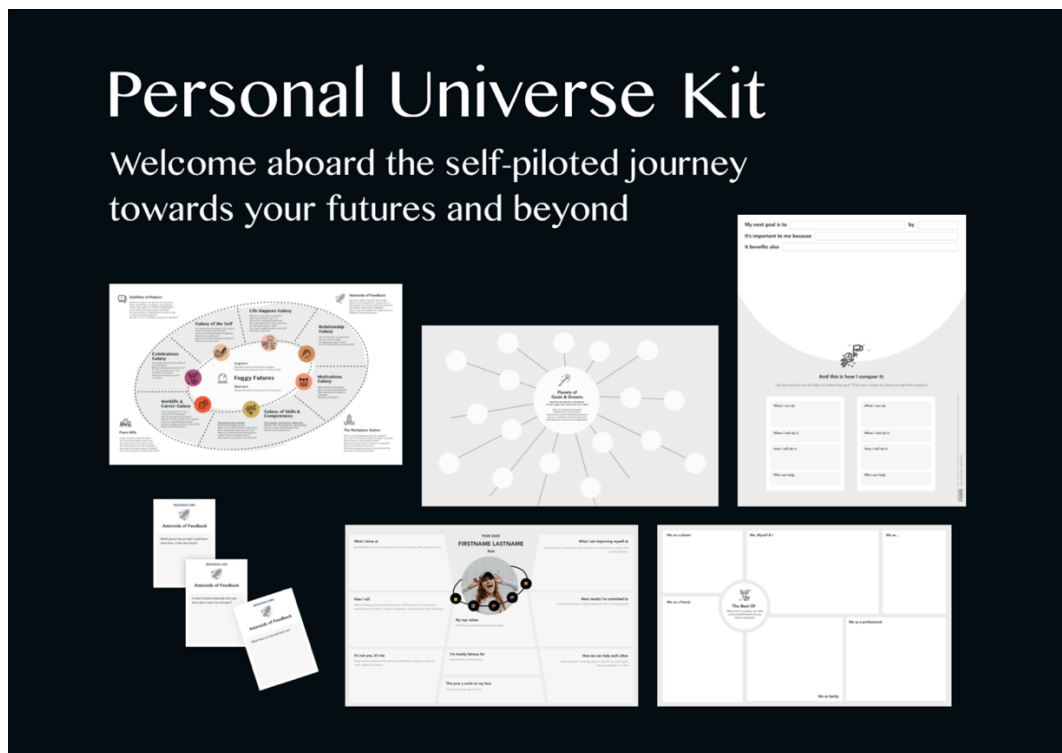


Figure 19. Personal Universe Kit tools overview

- My Universe canvas (Reflection Station)

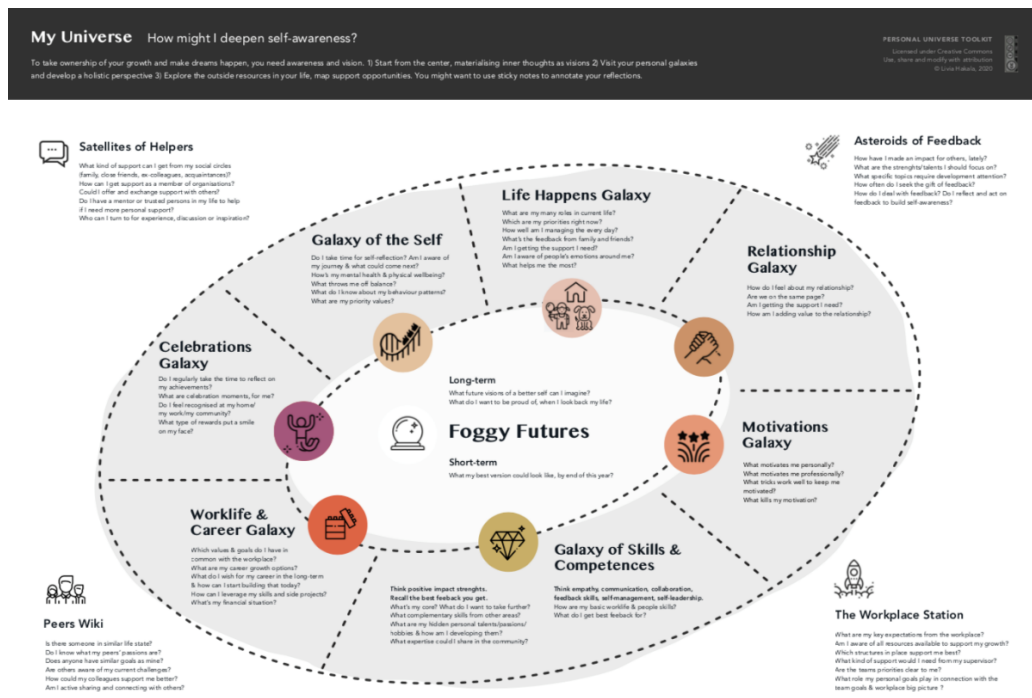


Figure 20. My Universe template, Personal Universe Kit

Reflection station contains My Universe template and Feedback cards.

This template creates opportunity for employees to practice self-awareness, reflect on feedback, gain perspective and consequently facilitates the clarification of visions in personal development. For the organization this template encourages empathy and a more holistic view of employees. It provides practical structure for deeper development discussions, and enables the workplace to identify types of support needed throughout different life events.

Starting from inwards to outwards, in Foggy Futures the employee is invited to an exercise of visualizing short-term and long-term dreams as visions. It's proven to be a difficult exercise which requires awareness, and that's exactly why it must be practiced even if clarity may feel impossible at first. Coming back to this section after reflecting on all others, the employee may have a more aware, new perspective.

Next, a visit to each of the different Personal Galaxies to develop more perspective in both personal and professional life spaces such as motivations, blockers, strengths and growth areas. The third and last step, the employee must visit each of the Supportive Systems on the corners, to gather perspective of feedback, workplace and extra-organizational resources available. For adding fun and more collaboration to the process of self-reflection, the

template can be used together with a trusted colleague or friend, coach, mentor, or even a close family member.

- **Feedback Cards (Reflection Station)**

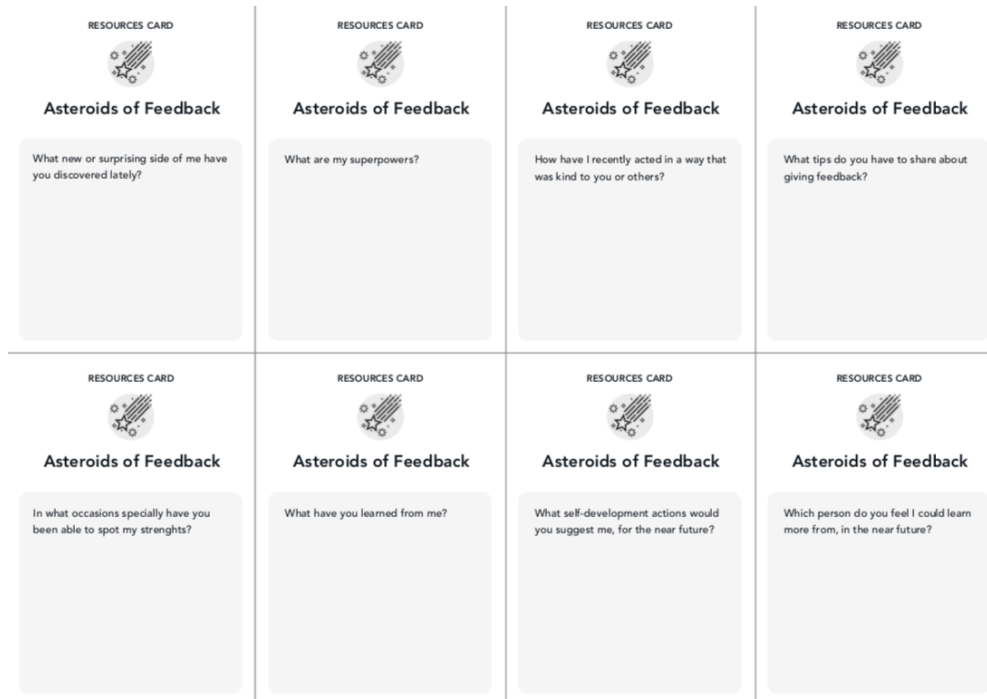


Figure 21. Feedback cards template, Personal Universe Kit

Ultimately this is a tool to assist employees plan data-based & holistic growth and develop the habit of feedback. For organizations it is aimed to encourage and improve feedback culture within the workplace.

Firstly, this tool can be used to support getting a holistic picture of the self, enabling the individual a better understanding of strengths and improvement areas from different perspectives through 360 feedback. In this type of feedback technique data is collected from multiple sources, and in the Personal Universe approach employees are encouraged to seek feedback also beyond the workplace: from family members, partners, friends.

Secondly, this tool can be used as a playful method to facilitate feedback and encourage a continuous feedback culture. Employees are encouraged to collect as many cards as possible throughout the whole personal development process. Individuals can give a card to each other in request of feedback, or they can freely fill in a feedback card for someone right after some day-to-day experience with that person. Cards are intended to be collected and later used in the next Reflection Station session as well as co-designing a growth plan with the supervisor in next Planning Station one-to-one session.

- **My Journey Plan (Planning Station)**

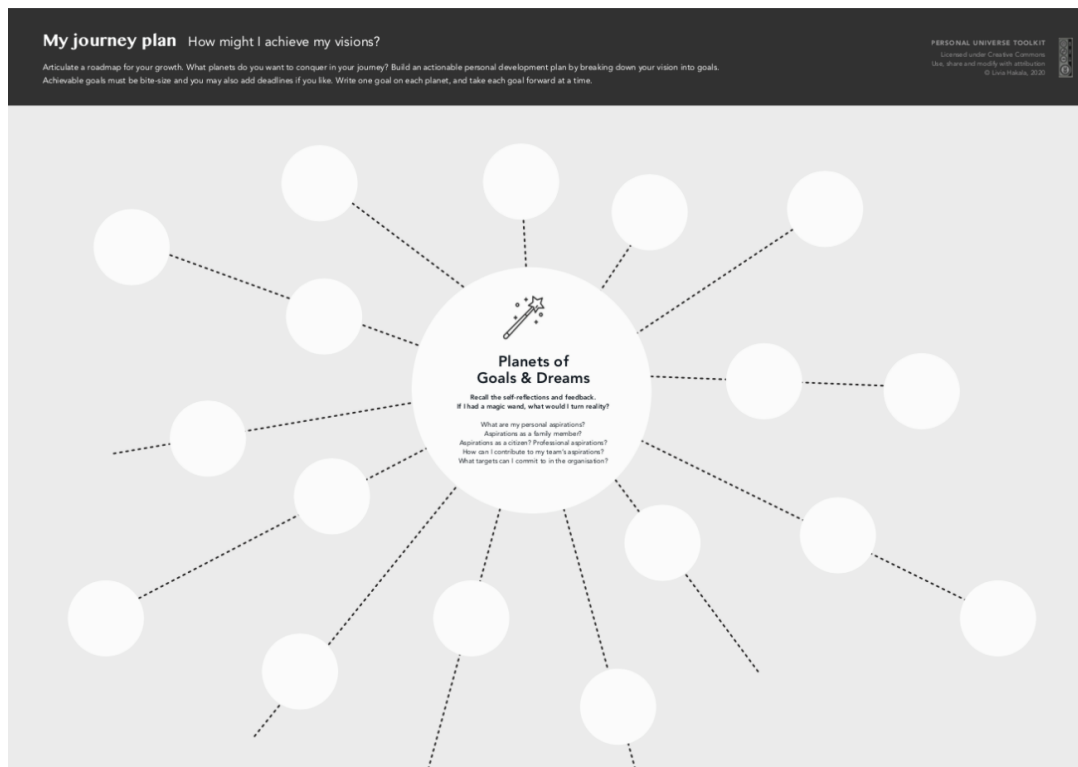


Figure 22. My Journey Plan template, Personal Universe Kit

This tool supports employee start translating the future visions for the self into concrete and achievable goals. For the organization this tool develops empathy and a more holistic view of employees, as provides structure for discussions and insight how the workplace can support throughout life events and dreams. As growth is not a linear journey, for documenting a personal development plan closer to reality this template frames it as a personal development map.

The employee is invited to start by reviewing learnings from reflection and feedback. After recalling key interests, challenges, growth areas, opportunities and supports, the employee writes down as many development goals as it comes to mind, in each of the circles called “planets”. For a holistic personal development, it’s important to add not only career goals but also aspirations from other many roles in personal life. The Employee is free to decide the scope (long or short term), but should list goals as small and specific as possible. For example, “Give 1 speech to an audience of +50 by July 2020” is a better goal than “Becoming more confident at public speaking”.

Once pre-filled by the employee, this template is a structure to facilitate 1-to-1 session where employee and supervisor together co-design the final map by discussing opportunities of alignment between personal goals and team goals. The supervisor contributes to co-design

the plan by offering wider perspectives about possibilities within the organization and career overall. This tool gives the supervisor has a key role in facilitating the employee frame a map which feels at the same time personal and meaningfully connected with the organization, to ensure intrinsic motivation and employee engagement.

This portfolio of personal development is ready to work as a reference material whenever it's time to pick a new goal and should also be updated as new perspectives arise. Having a roadmap helps employee keep track of what one wants to achieve and supports self-management skills. Pre-filling the template can be more fun if done collaboratively in pairs with a family member, a close friend or colleague.

- My Next Planet (Action Station)


**My next planet** How might I set clear and meaningful goals?

Select a goal to focus on. First, frame the mission story in a sentence including what the goal is, the time span, how it benefits you and why others could also care about it. Illustrate your conquer with images/drawings/keywords. Lastly, specify the detailed action & support needed to achieve the goal. Keep your poster visible!

My next goal is to  by

It's important to me because

It benefits also



**And this is how I conquer it:**

List the action(s) you will take to achieve this goal. Pitch your mission to others and get their support!

<p>What I can do</p> <p>When I will do it</p> <p>How I will do it</p> <p>Who can help</p>	<p>What I can do</p> <p>When I will do it</p> <p>How I will do it</p> <p>Who can help</p>
---	---

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Figure 23. My next planet template, Personal Universe Kit

This tool supports employee set clear and collaborative actions towards achieving goals. For the organization this tool supports alignment since well-defined and meaningful goals are usually tied to a shared purpose. The employee is invited to playfully think of one's goals as planets to conquer to their own universe.



Firstly, the employee uses the template to frame a concrete mission script, facilitated in 3 parts: (1) setting a clear and measurable goal statement (2) putting in concrete words how the goal contributes to one's personal development vision (3) how it can impact/benefit one's family, team, organization, industry, neighborhood, country, the planet.

Because envisioning the result is a strong enabler of goal achievement, the employee completes the template making a visualization of achievement. This can be done with collage of magazine pictures, free hand drawn scribbles, or simply a word cloud describing feelings and thoughts about achieving the goal.

Secondly, the employee commits to also concrete actions, to achieve the goal just framed and visualized. Each goal can have 1 or more actions, which are described in detail: what can be done, when it will be done, how it will be done, who can help. Because collaboration is key for goal achievement, identifying someone in the "who can help" section is crucial in this approach to goal setting. The recommendation is to commit to 1 goal at a time, maximum 2 (one more personal and one more professional if can't be combined).

- My Sneak peek (Sharing Station)

**My Universe sneakpeek** How might I share my goals, interests and motivators?


Build a summary profile based on your self-reflections, personal plan and goals. That will give a small perspective of yourself and help others understand you better. Share it also in the workplace and get the right support you need from your team, colleagues and managers. Include a photo and emojis that represent you.

PERSONAL UNIVERSE TOOLKIT  
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YEAR 2020

**FIRSTNAME LASTNAME**

Role



<p><b>What I shine at</b></p> <p><small>Recall feedback in core competences, all-around working skills, personal talents</small></p>	<p><b>What I am improving myself at</b></p> <p><small>Complimentary competences, self-awareness, self-management, people skills, passion projects...</small></p>
<p><b>How I roll</b></p> <p><small>Ways of working and personal preferences, Working hours &amp; arrangements, expectations and wishes in project management, communication, tools, feedback...</small></p>	<p><b>Next results I'm committed to</b></p> <p><small>Current personal goal, targets agreed for team or company goals</small></p>
<p><b>It's not you, it's me</b></p> <p><small>Stress factors, behaviours that throw me off balance, situations I prefer to avoid, nightmare projects...</small></p>	<p><b>I'm mostly famous for</b></p> <p><small>Special talent, fun fact, quote...</small></p>
<p><b>This puts a smile on my face</b></p> <p><small>Favorite moments, type of food...</small></p>	<p><b>How we can help each other</b></p> <p><small>Dream projects, coaching/support I need for my current goal, sparring expertise I can offer</small></p>

Figure 24. My Sneak peek template, Personal Universe Kit

This tool, like a visual CV, supports employee get buy-in and collaborative support for achieving personal development goals within the workplace, by publicly sharing own values, goals, competences, interests and motivators. For the organization this tool gives a concrete holistic perspective of employee, facilitates collaboration within the workplace and orchestrate the right support employee needs.

Firstly, the employee needs to share meaningful insights about oneself. This template provides the structure needed to communicate an updated overview perspective of who you are and what you are up to during the span of the current year. Secondly, in order to get the most valuable support, the employee must make oneself and one's goals visible, by sharing them. In practice, besides being open and vocal about one's current personal development actions, getting publicly may also mean, for example, presenting this template when start collaborating with a new team.

- My Achievements Board (Celebration Station)

**Achievements board** How might I get a sense of progress and goal achievement?

Time for self-reflection & recognising how far you have come. Build a growth portfolio of your achievements, professional and personal, small and big. To compose the visual representation of your growth you may use anything that helps you visualise your successes and wells as the journey: images, memes, drawings, wordclouds, feedback quotes.

PERSONAL UNIVERSE TOOLKIT  
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Me as a citizen	Me, Myself & I	Me as...
Me as a friend	<div style="border: 2px solid #ccc; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>The Best Of</b></p> <p style="font-size: 8px; margin: 0;">What recent successes, new skills and accomplishments do you wish to recognise?</p>	
	Me as a professional	Me as family

Figure 25. My Achievements Board template, Personal Universe Kit

This tool aims to ensure employee has time for self-reflection on latest growth, recognize achieved goals and provide encouragement for progress. For the organization this tool supports developing a holistic view of employees, as well as an open, sharing and encouraging

work culture. In practice, it provides time opportunity for self-reflection & recognizing how far you have come.

Firstly, the employee is invited to make space to self-reflect on the missions and achievements collected throughout the journey. One should recall the moments worth celebrating, the impact of the achievements on different people, the rewards or recognition earned and how it felt.

Secondly, it's important to make one's achievements visual and shareable. The template inspires the employee to get hands-on about celebrating achievements in all roles. The employee is supposed to visualize outcomes, moments of achieving desired goals as a family member, a friend, a partner, an employee, a citizen. The objective with this template is to create a concrete feeling of goal accomplishment and personal development progress, independently of how that is visualized. Anyone can choose the best way to communicate own reflections, the achievements poster can be made with a photo collage, doodles and illustrations, or even simply quotes of recognition they have received.

This step is designed for the individual to self-reflect on personal growth, and also to promote celebration culture within the workplace. For example, a fun way to share and celebrate individuals' achievements with the whole team can be a show & tell session, or a gallery exhibition of posters.

## 6 Conclusions

This chapter is dedicated to presenting a dialogue between the development work outcomes and the theoretical knowledge basis of the thesis. Key insights are articulated in connection with answers to the research questions in section 6.1; section 6.2 presents opportunities for future research; and section 6.3 covers my reflections on the process of writing the thesis and own assessment of the research.

### 6.1 Research outcomes

Why should organizations care about improving personal development at the workplace and helping employees seek happiness? Happiness at work translates to job satisfaction, engagement and organizational commitment. Employees who feel happy at work on a daily basis tend to respond by being more intrinsically motivated (Gilbert 2012). Employer-employee relationships are changing towards a direction of aligned values, meeting each other's expectations and mutual satisfaction. For organizations this approach may be the key to attract and retain top-talent (Fisher 2010).

Authors from diverse disciplines like career counselling, business management and positive psychology suggest that performance excellence is more correlated to focusing on strengths rather than improving weaknesses. Theories such as a self-concept presented by Brown (1996), Drucker's self-management (2008) as well as Seligman's view of self-actualization (2002) all support that each individual is equipped with a different toolbox of personal preferences, talents and skills one should focus on developing self-awareness of, to be able to design one's career by maximizing strengths and minimizing focus on lower competences. Seligman (2002) establishes direct relation between choosing this kind of personal development approach and enjoying happiness. Because work plays a big role in adult life, the theoretical framework introduced perspectives how the workplace can contribute to human flourishing by facilitating more positive employee experiences (Seligman 2011).

Employers should actively listen to employee suggestions or feedback and co-create improvements for the workplace environment and employee experiences. Organizations which invest in designing employee experiences and support personal growth are likely to have more qualified, motivated and happier employees, which is essential for any organization that wants to increase productivity, customer satisfaction and consequently do better in business (Plaskoff 2017).

Several organization practices related to people development have been linked to the above outcomes. A few relevant practices in the context of this thesis include supporting intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation e.g. rewarding performance (Buckingham & Goodall 2019), facilitating fun experiences (West & al. 2017) and trusting employee self-management abilities (Drucker 1992). Not only can these practices improve employee motivation leading to self-actualization, but also increase alignment with the organization and employee retention.

This thesis investigated how employees perceive personal development experiences and ended finding direct relations with work meaningfulness and engagement. Such findings were also reported by a recent study (Fletcher 2019) which set out to understand better how personal development implicates in employee engagement. As it turns out, Fletcher (2019) also found that employee perception regarding opportunities for meaningful personal development can be associated with employee engagement at work.

The concept of meaningfulness he took in the research comes directly from Kahn 2010, according to which "people need to feel as if they matter, that their contributions have meaning" (Fletcher 2019, 6). In the context of this thesis I have observed employees framing the same employee need as they described their personal development, for instance "I want my goals to have a personal connection and be relevant to the company. I want to feel important and valued in this environment". From their perspective, it becomes to me clear

how a lack of collaboration in goal setting causes the employee to perceive own personal development as not meaningful.

Overall, factors I have identified facilitating meaningful personal development include support for self-awareness and collaboration towards personal growth. A key contributing factor for employee ownership of personal development is to support self-management skills by facilitating self-awareness. Developing a more aware and wide perspective of the self and surrounding opportunities has been connected as key skills for effectively managing own personal development and overall satisfaction in work and life (Drucker 2008; Seligman 2002). Employees who struggle with practicing self-awareness attribute their challenge to a lack of dedicated time to clarify dreams and goals (necessary to take meaningful steps in everyday work and life) and time to reflect strengths, learnings and achievements on a personal level (only existing on a team or unit level).

Another key for meaningful personal development is to maintain the process a priority amongst our busy work and personal routines, and facilitate daily progress. Visual prompting is reported as a good technique, employees already use as knowledge workers to complete job tasks (strategic placement of post-its, calendars, to-do lists). Keeping goals visual and top of mind has been indicated in interviews as a factor for enabling positive perceptions in personal development too, and one employee illustrates that “if I can’t see it, it didn’t happen”.

By supporting visual documentation of thoughts and tasks towards goal achievement, the toolkit can increase the sense of direction and enable progress. There’s also something fundamentally motivating about crossing to-do lists. Employees mention that even just taking the time to list things out already counts as an effective support. Visually tracking progress and acknowledging when goals are achieved has been found to be as important as planning the steps, and is theoretically connected with the feeling of satisfaction (Roos 2006).

Learning from employee perspective about the crucial contribution of closer relationships to personal growth, places collaboration as one of the key enablers in personal development. Organizations must activate intra-organizational resources to contribute more efficiently as facilitators of personal development, especially the need for more meaningful collaborations with supervisors (Fletcher 2019) as this relationship has a deal of impact within employee perceptions of personal development.

While I suggest that supervisors take a **facilitating role** in personal development, Fletcher frames it as a **moderating role**. Both descriptions agree as they identify a key potential for supervisors in assisting the creation of meaning (Fletcher 2019) by 1) lending the employee their glasses of wide perspective to career, 2) providing perspective about the importance one’s work and goals in the context of the unit and organization, 3) supporting personal

development actions by providing inspiration and connecting the employee to the relevant resources.

As a solution to this, the toolkit offers a frame for supervisors and employees co-create personal development meaningful goals and achievable actions. Also, offers employees the tools to public communicate the co-created personal development plan. This is a very practical way to leverage support from other people towards one's goals: by making collaboration opportunities clearer, what each can contribute to the other. Employees interviewed also indicated that personal sharing at the workplace can be more beneficial than harmful, if only the employee remains fully in control of what's shared.

This thesis focused on investigating how play and service design could offer contributions how to make personal development experiences more meaningful for organizations, and most importantly for employees. This thesis verified empirically and through how play can have a differentiating role in facilitating employee experience design by building safe space, trust and collaboration for a comfortable and enjoyable interview experience and other employee experiences.

Service design process and methods (double diamond process, workshops, interviews, prototyping) enabled the creation of a toolkit based on employee participation and insights. According to Nielsen Norman Group (Gibbons 2017) service design is not just about designing service solutions for customer experience; it's also a methodology for addressing how organizations utilize its resources in order to deliver such service offering. As for results of the toolkit, it successfully proposes a tangible and flexible approach for driving employee ownership of personal growth.

The solutions were prototyped with the aim to provide employees more support, and be rather flexible than a set of rigid instructions (Pralhad & Ramaswamy 2013). It means this can be taken into use by many organizations besides the case company and, in practice, it also means employer and employees should be able to combine these tools with their existing personal development approaches if they choose to do so, in a way that best fits their individual needs or preferences.

Finally, this research succeeded at showing how playful mindset can be combined with service design process and methods for designing an employee driven personal development experience. The Personal Universe Kit delivered offers the case company a fresh approach to HR development, inviting employees and organization to embark on a collaborative journey. The employee driven approach also supports the organization develop a holistic consideration of individuals without a distinction between personal and professional. The list bellow collects potential for this approach in delivering the following results:

- Employee feels empowered, equipped to take ownership of own growth
- More alignment between employee & organization
- Facilitate supervisor's work & develop understanding of individual's support needs
- Employee knows what to expect from one-on-one meetings & how to prepare
- Organization develops a holistic understanding of employees and teams
- Supports a collaborative culture with both co-workers & supervisors

## 6.2 Considerations for future research

### **Remote collaboration in personal development**

The tools were designed with empowerment in mind so that individuals would be able to use them independently, but they were also designed with a goal of promote collaboration in workplace process. Thus, I would find it an interesting opportunity to explore how this toolkit performs in the context where collaboration is mainly online. Firstly, I believe there is the obvious need to create a digital format version of the toolkit to be filled in directly on the screen without the need to print templates. The digital format would be easy to share and received input from collaborators. Secondly, there is the question whether the tools in that format would still function as intended, or if there would be a need to revisit the concept and redesign the proposed model of collaboration in each template.

### **Futures-oriented Service Design for personal development experiences**

During this process I learned that personal development relies a lot on having a vision where you want to get and working backwards towards it. Futures-oriented service design is an approach that combines Design Thinking and Futures Thinking, offering specific methods to facilitate the framing of future and strategic planning supporting how to reach a vision. Such methods could easily be used in the context of life scenarios or visions.

Futures-oriented SD is grounded on signals and trends, taking an active position in observing the changes in work and life in society may inspire and empower employees by opening new perceptions on growth opportunities. Exploring futures-oriented service design mindset and methods could be an interesting way to approach personal development processes and tools.

## 6.3 Reflections and acknowledgements

Existing employee experience initiatives within the case company were very helpful for supporting this research. For example, early during interview planning phase I already had initial tool concepts to discuss with employees, as well as qualitative data material co-

created and documented as results of EX workshops. Concept development was a pleasant process thanks to direct collaboration with the case company throughout the thesis. Early during ideation phase, the concepts were shared and iterated based on quick feedback sessions with the EX specialist. I was glad employees were eager to volunteer to participate on the research, however before that happened I was concerned whether employees would trust in me as a thesis researcher, so to manage expectations I took great care to clearly explain my agenda.

Being an employee of the case organization myself, I experienced that designing for employee experience was challenging as it required an extra layer of enforcing objectivity and impartiality expected from a researcher. After this experience I believe approaching employee experience can perhaps be easier with help from external consultants. While facilitating workshops and interviews for this thesis I was very aware of confirmation bias. Stickdorn & al. (2018) detects confirmation bias as a designer starts looking for evidence that supports own assumptions while ignoring other input. Especially during data analysis this risk was possible to notice, and as a result in order to try and avoid the bias, data analysis took me a huge chunk of time and effort in the thesis process.

I am glad to be able to explore in this thesis context my personal interest in playful methods for workplace experiences facilitation. I was able to harvest the benefits of play by using playful methods in two occasions during the thesis process: the LEGO workshop and qualitative employee interviews. According to employee feedback I succeeded in creating through play a safe space for collaboration, where they could feel comfortable to share very personal topics with a co-worker. Finally, I am glad to be able to achieve my ambition of producing tangible solutions to concretely improve workplace experiences for my colleagues, but also for any employee in Finland or perhaps the world.

I'll be forever thankful to the people who walked this journey by my side. To Laurea, thanks for empathy and flexibility that enabled me to achieve this. Thesis supervisor Maria Ekström, thanks for the encouraging and insightful conversations that gave me back direction and sparkles of energy to continue. To my workplace, thanks for being supportive of my personal dreams throughout the years and thanks for the opportunity of developing the thesis project. To my work colleagues, thanks for lending me the words that supported me transform this passion topic into a small contribution to the world. Thanks for the encouragement and feedback, it was a pleasure to collaborate together. To friends and family, my support rocks. Thanks for following me throughout the process and being there for me in every possible way I needed. To my husband and sons. Thanks for understanding and giving me not only the support I asked for, but far more than I ever deserved.



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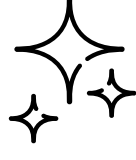
Appendices

Appendix 1: The complete toolkit and instructions how to play



## PERSONAL UNIVERSE KIT

# A set of tools for anyone inspired to pursue future versions of the self, with a pinch of fun.



Word on the street is that Nasa allows astronauts to carry in space missions a tiny white bag they call “Personal Preference Kit” containing special mementos and personal items. Inspired by this, the **Personal Universe Kit** proposes a small collection of tools to give individuals a very personal support throughout their life-long mission of personal development.

The purpose of personal development is to continually seek growth and find ways to improve oneself and be happier. According to research, employees who take more ownership of personal development at the workplace can increase their chances to experience more joy, meaning and balance in everyday life and work.





## PERSONAL UNIVERSE KIT

# What's in it

This kit offers a refreshed approach to personal development with a playful tone and a set of collaborative tools to support five key areas: Reflection, Planning, Acting, Sharing & Celebrating.

Designed based on service design methodology and play principles, the templates were designed with the purpose to deepen self-awareness, give clarity to aspirations, identify opportunities, encourage collaboration, navigate obstacles, facilitate concrete goals and actions, recognise achievements and ultimately, create a feeling that life is going forward and so are you. The kit is intended to offer support, not produce definite answers or be followed as a rigid process.

The tools are licensed under Creative Commons and free to use, share and adapt with attribution. The Personal Universe kit is a personal project which keeps being developed, so please share your feedback at <https://liviahakala.typeform.com/to/E543ji> and stay tuned for additional resources.

## For individuals

You are a professional, a student, a parent, a child, a partner, a friend, a neighbour, a citizen. Here you will find support to take ownership of your growth with the holistic perspective that takes you who you are as an individual.

## For organisations

Taking a holistic approach to understanding employees may be more challenging, however it can improve retention and happiness. This set of tools may be introduced in workplace processes to support the organisation empathise and connect with employees on new levels.

# User's Manual

Personal development is a journey and here are five stops to guide you through it. Remember, it's a life-long process and you may repeat this cycle according to what fits you best.

## 1 Reflection station

*How might I deepen my self-awareness?*

## 2 Planning station

*How might I achieve my future visions?*

## 3 Action station

*How might I set clear and meaningful goals?*

## 4 Sharing station

*How might I share my interests and motivators?*

## 5 Celebration station

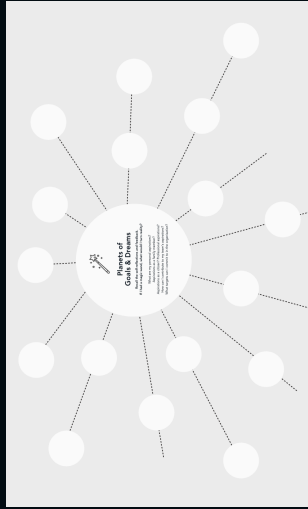
*How might I get a sense of progress and goal achievement?*

## How to play

This template was designed for your own use. No need to be concerned if you are doing this as part of a workplace process, you can later choose which specific parts of it you would want to discuss with a supervisor.

- You may choose to use all the tools, or just some of them
- Use it by yourself
- Use it with a partner, close friend or colleague for perspective
- Use it as a base for discussion with a supervisor
- You may use the tools digitally or printed
- For documentation you'll need a pen and sticky notes or a journal, or you can create a digital document

# Welcome aboard the self-piloted journey towards your futures and beyond



My next goal is to \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

It's important to me because \_\_\_\_\_

It benefits also \_\_\_\_\_

And this is how I conquer it:

List the activity you will do to achieve the goal. Try your mission to others and get their support!

What I can do	When I will do it	How I will do it	Who can help



What I like at \_\_\_\_\_

What I am improving myself at \_\_\_\_\_

Next month I'm committed to \_\_\_\_\_

How can I help each other \_\_\_\_\_

My top values \_\_\_\_\_

I'm mostly known for \_\_\_\_\_

This point is critical on my life \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR 2022  
FIRSTNAME LASTNAME  
Role

Me as a citizen \_\_\_\_\_

Me as a friend \_\_\_\_\_

Me as a professional \_\_\_\_\_

Me as a family \_\_\_\_\_

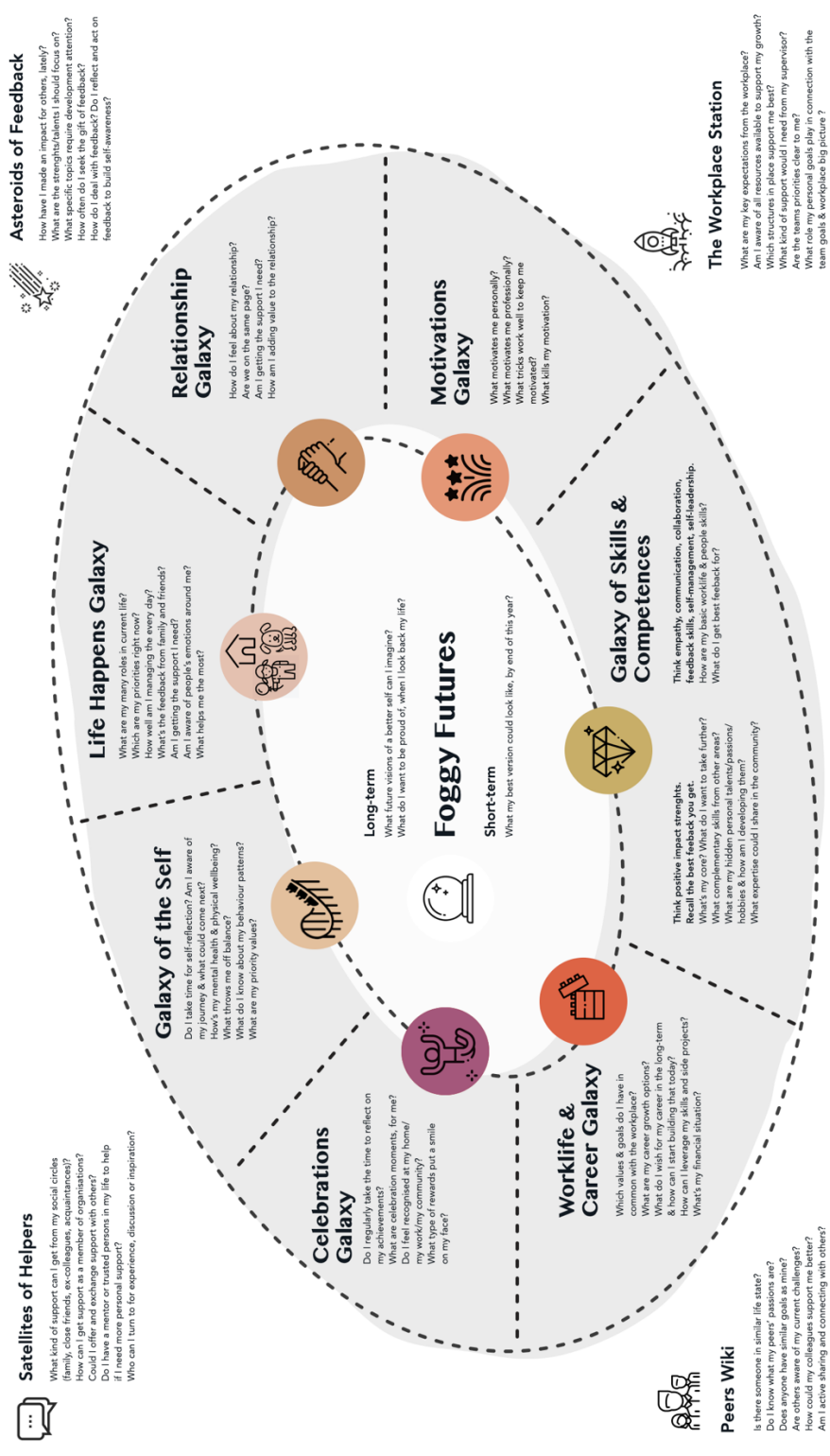
Me as a \_\_\_\_\_









Me as a \_\_\_\_\_

# My Universe How might I deepen self-awareness?

To take ownership of your growth and make dreams happen, you need awareness and vision. 1) Start from the center, materialising inner thoughts as visions 2) Visit your personal galaxies and develop a holistic perspective 3) Explore the outside resources in your life, map support opportunities. You might want to use sticky notes to annotate your reflections.

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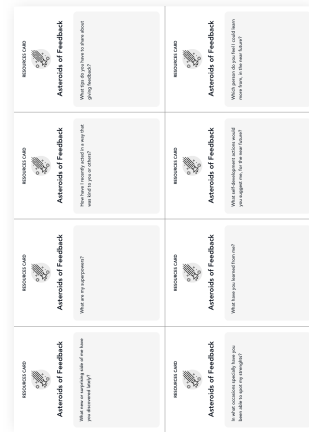


<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>What new or surprising side of me have you discovered lately?</p>	<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>What are my superpowers?</p>	<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>How have I recently acted in a way that was kind to you or others?</p>	<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>What tips do you have to share about giving feedback?</p>
<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>In what occasions specially have you been able to spot my strenghts?</p>	<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>What have you learned from me?</p>	<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>What self-development actions would you suggest me, for the near future?</p>	<p>RESOURCES CARD</p>  <p><b>Asteroids of Feedback</b></p> <p>Which person do you feel I could learn more from, in the near future?</p>

## USER'S MANUAL

# Reflection Station

How might I deepen self-awareness?



## TOOLS

My Universe, Feedback Cards

## OBJECTIVE

To make dreams and goals more likely to happen, you must reflect your present and visualise your futures. Personal development is an ongoing journey which starts by developing a holistic perspective of the self. Besides your own observations you must also consider feedback from the people in your life.

## HOW TO PLAY

### 1) Foggy Futures

Start by trying to channel inner aspirations into clearer visions. It's fine if you can't gather a picture yet, you can always return here after finishing the next steps. You may close your eyes to help with the visualisation exercise.

### 2) Personal Galaxies

Visit the 7 personal galaxies by yourself or with a close and trusted person, to expand your perspectives. While you may start from any galaxy, try first exploring the Galaxy of the Self and continue the journey clockwise until Celebrations Galaxy.

### 3) Support Systems

Explore the structures you have available around you, identify missing ones, discover connections and map opportunities for more collaboration and support on your growth journey. On top you find the wider social structures, on bottom the workplace-related ones.

## TIPS

You may reflect by yourself or invite a trusted person (partner, friend, mentor) to facilitate a Q&A type of fun, or both!

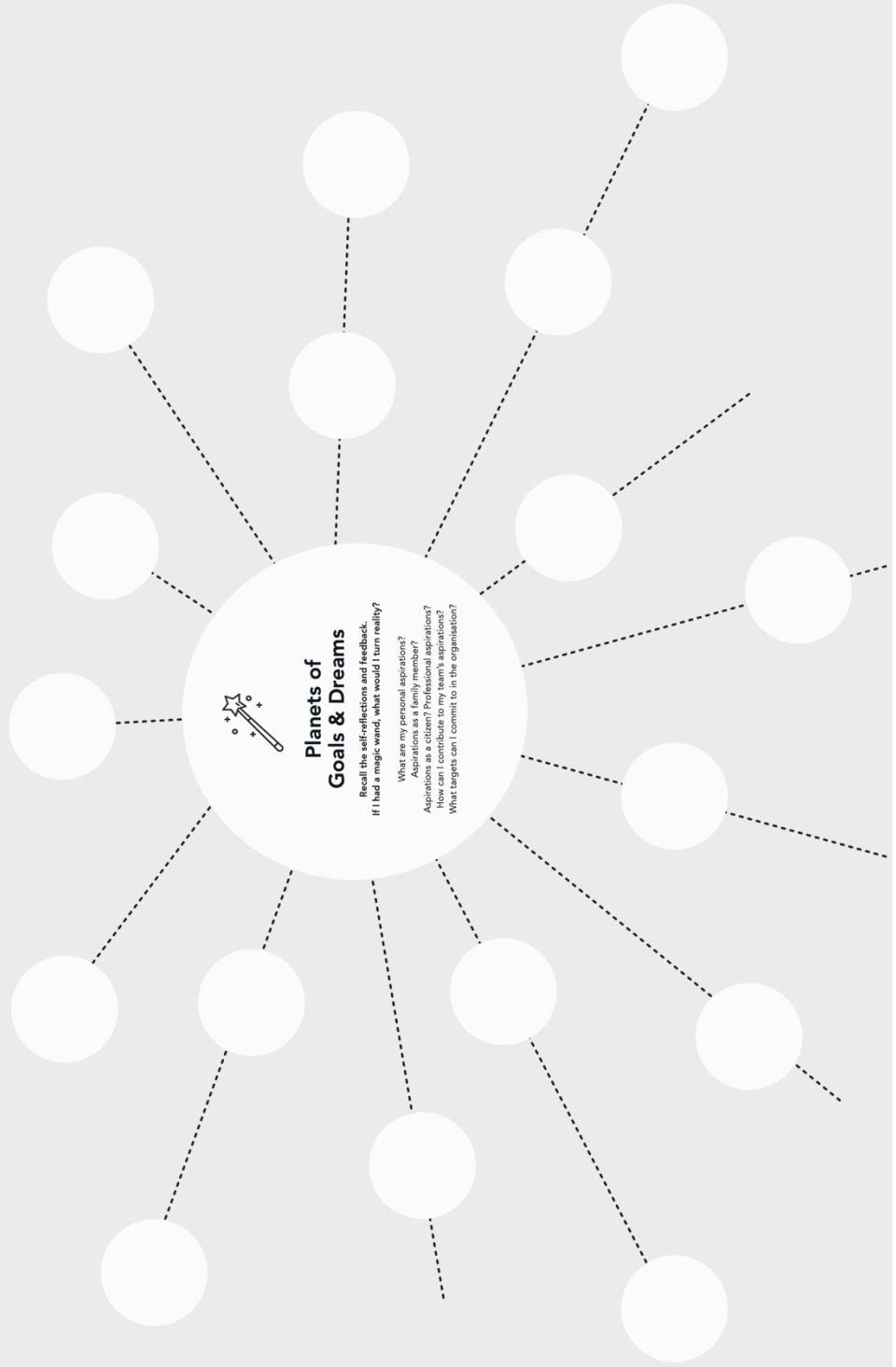
Feel free to annotate directly on the template or on sticky notes, or you may want to write on a separate document like a private journal or file.

Make sure to incorporate feedback from the people in your life to gather a holistic perspective of yourself. You may use Feedback Cards to regularly collect feedback.

## My journey plan How might I achieve my visions?

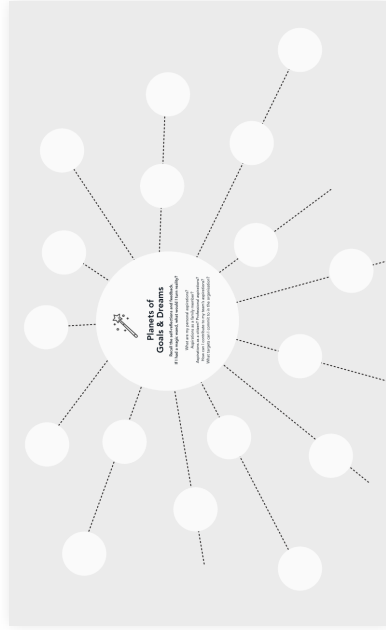
Articulate a roadmap for your growth. What planets do you want to conquer in your journey? Build an actionable personal development plan by breaking down your vision into goals. Achievable goals must be bite-size and you may also add deadlines if you like. Write one goal on each planet, and take each goal forward at a time.

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# Planning Station

How might I achieve my visions?



## TOOLS

My journey plan

## OBJECTIVE

Start making the future visions for the self more concrete. List your goals and refer to this plan often, updating it as your perspectives change. Having a roadmap helps keep you on track of what you want to achieve, and supports develop self-management of your personal development.

## HOW TO PLAY

### 1) Recalling goals

Start by revisiting what you learned about yourself and your current life state. Most likely you identified interests, challenges, growth areas, opportunities and supports. Make sure to review also the feedback you've been getting.

### 2) Writing goals

You can write down as many goals as it comes to mind. This is your roadmap of goals so you have a reference to look whenever it's time to pick a new goal to work on. You may revisit this list as many times as you want. For a holistic personal development you may trace not only career goals but also what you want to achieve in your other many roles in personal life.

## TIPS

You're free to decide if the scope of goals is for the next year or 3 years. They may be also be assigned in a specific order or not. The priority is to make goals as small and specific as possible:

"Give 1 speech to an audience of +50 by July 2020" is a better goal example than "Becoming more confident at public speaking".

Goal planning can be easier and more fun if done collaboratively in pairs with a family member, a close friend or colleague. At the workplace you may ask the support of your supervisor to define together your career goals in ways that contribute at same time with the team's and organisation's aspirations.



## My next planet How might I set clear and meaningful goals?

Select a goal to focus on. First, frame the mission story in a sentence including what the goal is, the time span, how it benefits you and why others could also care about it. Illustrate your conquer with images/drawings/keywords. Lastly, specify the detailed action & support needed to achieve the goal. Keep your poster visible!

My next goal is to  by

It's important to me because

It benefits also



### And this is how I conquer it:

List the action(s) you will take to achieve this goal. Pitch your mission to others and get their support!

What I can do
When I will do it
How I will do it
Who can help

What I can do
When I will do it
How I will do it
Who can help



# Action Station

How might I set clear and meaningful goals?

## TOOLS

My next planet

## OBJECTIVE

Much like the Little Prince goes on a journey to get to know new planets, you also can think of your goals as planets you'd like to conquer to your own universe. When you have a portfolio of goals you wish to achieve, it's time to choose a single goal at a time to focus on, well defined and achievable. The most meaningful goals usually are also tied to a shared purpose that is not only yours.

## HOW TO PLAY

### 1) Inspiration

Frame a focused & concrete goal statement that will inspire and put you closer to your short and long-term future visions. In the context of the workplace, the more aligned or connected to a bigger picture the more meaningful the goal feels. Make sure to frame how the goal contributes for your goal, and at the same time what benefits it might bring to others around you, your team or the organisation.

Complete the mission script with a visualisation of your goal achieved!

### 2) Action

Ideate what exactly steps you can execute in order to achieve the goal. Use the Action Cards as a template for the critical details of your action. Ideation may be easier collaboratively with a close friend, mentor, colleague or supervisor. Make your goal visible publicly, you can get help you may need, be it practical support or even just incentive.

## TIPS

Resist the temptation to work on multiple goals at once, you can always take a new goal as soon as you've achieved one.

It's important to follow-up on goal progress regularly to ensure support or adapt actions. You may refer back to this document during one-on-one meetings with a supervisor. "It's the not the destination, it's the journey."

Get familiar with other people's goals, you may have something to contribute or have goals in common and benefit each other!

## My Universe sneakpeek How might I share my goals, interests and motivators?


Build a summary profile based on your self-reflections, personal plan and goals. That will give a small perspective of yourself and help others understand you better. Share it also in the workplaces and get the right support you need from your team, colleagues and managers. Include a photo and emojis that represent you!

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YEAR 2020

FIRSTNAME LASTNAME

Role



**What I shine at**  
Recall feedback in core competences, all-around working skills, personal talents

**What I am improving myself at**  
Complimentary competences, self-awareness, self-management, people skills, passion projects...

**How I roll**  
Ways of working and personal preferences. Working hours & arrangements, expectations and wishes in project management, communication, tools, feedback...

**Next results I'm committed to**  
Current personal goal, targets agreed for team or company goals

**My top values**  
Personal and professional guiding principles

**How we can help each other**  
Dream projects, coaching/support I need for my current goal, sparring expertise I can offer

**It's not you, it's me**  
Stress factors, behaviours that throw me off balance, situations I prefer to avoid, nightmare projects...

**I'm mostly famous for**  
Special talent, fun fact, quote...

**This puts a smile on my face**  
Favorite moments, type of food...

## USER'S MANUAL

# Sharing Station

How might I share my goals, interests and motivators?

The form is a circular graphic divided into several sections. At the top, it says 'YEAR 2020' and 'FIRSTNAME LASTNAME'. Below that is a central photo of a woman with a circular graphic overlaying it. The sections are:

- What I believe in:** Read: I believe in team cooperation, in shared working style, personal growth.
- How I roll:** I am a person who is very organized, I like to be in control, I like to be in charge, I like to be in charge of my own destiny, I like to be in charge of my own destiny.
- My top values:** I value my family, my friends, my work, my health, my education, my growth, my learning, my development, my improvement, my progress, my success, my achievement, my accomplishment, my fulfillment, my happiness, my joy, my love, my passion, my enthusiasm, my energy, my motivation, my inspiration, my creativity, my innovation, my leadership, my influence, my impact, my contribution, my service, my dedication, my commitment, my loyalty, my integrity, my honesty, my transparency, my accountability, my responsibility, my ownership, my initiative, my proactivity, my positivity, my optimism, my confidence, my self-esteem, my self-worth, my self-respect, my self-love, my self-care, my self-growth, my self-improvement, my self-development, my self-actualization, my self-fulfillment, my self-actualization, my self-fulfillment.
- What I am improving myself at:** Communication, organization, time management, self-awareness, self-management, personal growth, personal development.
- Next results I'm committed to:** Career, personal growth, professional growth, personal development, personal improvement.
- I'm mostly focused for:** Personal growth, personal development, personal improvement, personal achievement, personal success, personal fulfillment, personal happiness, personal joy, personal love, personal passion, personal enthusiasm, personal energy, personal motivation, personal inspiration, personal creativity, personal innovation, personal leadership, personal influence, personal impact, personal contribution, personal service, personal dedication, personal commitment, personal loyalty, personal integrity, personal honesty, personal transparency, personal accountability, personal responsibility, personal ownership, personal initiative, personal proactivity, personal positivity, personal optimism, personal confidence, personal self-esteem, personal self-worth, personal self-respect, personal self-love, personal self-care, personal self-growth, personal self-improvement, personal self-development, personal self-actualization, personal self-fulfillment.
- This puts a smile on my face:** Personal growth, personal development, personal improvement, personal achievement, personal success, personal fulfillment, personal happiness, personal joy, personal love, personal passion, personal enthusiasm, personal energy, personal motivation, personal inspiration, personal creativity, personal innovation, personal leadership, personal influence, personal impact, personal contribution, personal service, personal dedication, personal commitment, personal loyalty, personal integrity, personal honesty, personal transparency, personal accountability, personal responsibility, personal ownership, personal initiative, personal proactivity, personal positivity, personal optimism, personal confidence, personal self-esteem, personal self-worth, personal self-respect, personal self-love, personal self-care, personal self-growth, personal self-improvement, personal self-development, personal self-actualization, personal self-fulfillment.
- How we can help each other:** Personal growth, personal development, personal improvement, personal achievement, personal success, personal fulfillment, personal happiness, personal joy, personal love, personal passion, personal enthusiasm, personal energy, personal motivation, personal inspiration, personal creativity, personal innovation, personal leadership, personal influence, personal impact, personal contribution, personal service, personal dedication, personal commitment, personal loyalty, personal integrity, personal honesty, personal transparency, personal accountability, personal responsibility, personal ownership, personal initiative, personal proactivity, personal positivity, personal optimism, personal confidence, personal self-esteem, personal self-worth, personal self-respect, personal self-love, personal self-care, personal self-growth, personal self-improvement, personal self-development, personal self-actualization, personal self-fulfillment.

### TOOLS

My Universe sneakpeek

### OBJECTIVE

Build a summary profile based on your self-reflections, personal plan and goals. That will give a small perspective of yourself and help others understand you better. Share it in the workplace and get the right support you need from your team, colleagues and managers.

### HOW TO PLAY

- 1) Make yourself visible**  
Besides your name and role, include your photo and emojis that represent your day-to-day life or what's important to you.
- 2) Share meaningful insights about you**  
You may want to create a profile that gives an updated overview perspective of who you are and what you are up to during the span of the current year. Revisit and update the profile and you grow or engage on new goals.

### TIPS

Share your profile everytime you join a new project team or introduce yourself to a new supervisor.

## Achievements board How might I get a sense of progress and goal achievement?

Time for self-reflection & recognising how far you have come. Build a growth portfolio of your achievements, professional and personal, small and big. To compose the visual representation of your growth you may use anything that helps you visualise your successes and wells as the journey: images, memes, drawings, wordclouds, feedback quotes.

PERSONAL UNIVERSE TOOLKIT  
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Me as a citizen

Me, Myself & I

Me as...

Me as a friend



### The Best Of

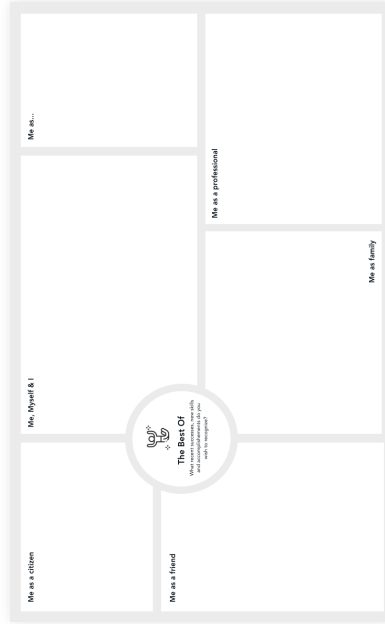
What recent successes, new skills  
and accomplishments do you  
wish to recognize?

Me as a professional

Me as family

# Celebration Station

How might I get a sense of progress and goal achievement?



## TOOLS

Achievements board

## OBJECTIVE

Make space to reflect on the missions and achievements collected throughout the journey. This exercise can support learning and keep motivation high.

## HOW TO PLAY

- 1) **Self-reflection**  
Recall the moments worth celebrating, the impact of your achievements on different people, the rewards or recognition you earned and how you felt.
- 2) **Collage**  
Make your achievements visual and shareable. Feel free to choose the best way to communicate your reflections. The important is to create a concrete feeling of goal accomplishment and personal development progress.

## TIPS

A show&tell session can be a fun way to share and celebrate individuals' achievements with the whole team.

The Personal Universe kit is a project in constant development. Stay tuned for additional resources and share your feedback at:

<https://liviahakala.typeform.com/to/E543ji>

Hope you enjoy the journey!