Designing creative agency-client relationships

A strategy to build lasting relationships for impact

Appendices

master thesis

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July 2021

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a. Interview guide heads

Unplugged

Wat is de value proposition van Unplugged?
Wat is Unplugged's huidige rol in projecten met klanten?
Wat is Unplugged's huidige positie in relatie tot de klant tijdens projecten?
Welke rol en/of positie zou je willen dat Unplugged inneemt in een ideale situatie?
Hoe definieer jij succes voor Unplugged?
Hoe word dat gemeten?
Waarom word dat zo gemeten?
Wat zijn volgens jouw de huidige gebreken van Unplugged?
Wat is het doel van Unplugged?
Wat zijn de kernwaarden van Unplugged?
Wat is jouw visie voor Unplugged?
Welke veranderingen zie je voor ogen om dit te bereiken (hoe ga je dit bereiken)?

Persoonlijk

Wat is jouw rol binnen Unplugged (voor het team)?
Wat is jouw rol voor de klanten van Unplugged?
Wat word er vastgesteld met de klant voorafgaande aan het project (duur, deliverables, process)?
Hoe word er beslist wie er op een project geplaatst word?
Wanneer/ in welke omstandigheden word jij betrokken bij projecten?
Waarom word jij hierin betrokken?
Hoe pak je die situatie meestal aan?
Waarom zo en werkt dit (in welk voordeel)?

Klant en relatie

In de volgende grafiek, wat zou je zeggen is de doorsnee klant van Unplugged?
Zijn er verschillen met de gekozen omschrijving?
Zou je zeggen dat de klant evolueert of verandert tijdens of na projecten met Unplugged?
Hoe verandert de klant en tot wat?
Hoe zou de klant waar je ideaal mee zou willen werken er uit zien?

In de volgende tabel zie je drie agency-client relaties, welk zou je zeggen is meest representatief voor jullie relatie met klanten?
Zijn er verschillen met de gekozen omschrijving?
Zou je zeggen dat de relatie evolueert of verandert tijdens of na projecten met Unplugged?
Hoe verandert de relatie en tot wat?
Hoe zou de relatie waar je ideaal in zou willen werken er uit zien?

b. Interview guide clients

Klant

Omschrijf het deel van het bedrijf dat samenwerkt met Unplugged (mensen, functies,..)
Omschrijf de beslissing rangorde van het bedrijf als het komt op het werk van Unplugged
Omschrijf als mogelijk jullie interne politiek (relevant aan het werk van Unplugged)?
Hoe definiëren jullie succes?
Hoe meten jullie dat (KPI's)?
Hoe stellen jullie doelen?
Door wie worden deze bepaald?
Wat zijn de kernwaarden van jullie bedrijf of afdeling?
Heb jij ook waarden die je toepast in je werk en welk zijn dezen?
Op basis van welke informatie worden beslissingen gemaakt?
Waaraan moeten voorstellen voldoen opdat ze worden doorgevoerd?
Voorafgaande aan het project met Unplugged hadden jullie kennis over of ervaring met het innovatie process dat Unplugged hanteert?

Unplugged

Hoe zijn jullie bij Unplugged terecht gekomen?
Wat was de reden voor het inhuren van Unplugged?
Wat waren voor jullie de essentiële factoren waar de agency aan moest voldoen?
Wat voor gedrag of welke manier van voordoen verwachten jullie van Unplugged?
Wat voor deliverables verwachten jullie van Unplugged?
Op welke mannier verwachten jullie dat deze overgedragen worden?
Hebben/hadden jullie verder nog verwachtingen van Unplugged (rol)?
Globaal gezien heeft Unplugged voldaan aan jullie verwachtingen?
Op welke manieren wel of niet?
Waarom ervaren jullie dat als voldoen of niet voldoen?
Wat was Unplugged's grootste toedragen of waarmee leverden ze het meeste waarde?

Relatie

Omschrijf het process dat jullie door zijn gegaan met Unplugged?
Hoe vaak waren jullie in communicatie of werkten jullie samen?
Hoe zien de momenten van interactie er uit (presentatie, discussie, creatie,…)?
Hoe vind je hun manier van communiceren en mogelijk vocabulaire?
Wat vind je van het werk dat ze voordragen en waarom?
Wat vind je van hun karakter en waarom?

Welke rol spelen jullie en Unplugged tijdens jullie werk samen en evolueerde dit?
of hoe zou je de relatie omschrijven tussen jullie en evolueerde deze?
Zo ja, hoe is jouw gedrag naar hen toe of perceptie van hen verandert?

Van de volgende drie uitspraken, welk omschrijft best jullie relatie met Unplugged (waarom)?

1. Unplugged werkt en denkt samen met jullie als partners
2. Unplugged werkt voor jullie om inzichten en oplossingen op te leveren
3. Unplugged is jullie aan het coachen om zelf creatieve processen toe te passen

Hoe meten jullie de waarde van het werk dat Unplugged aan jullie levert?
Heb je intern veranderingen opgemerkt in processen, aanpakken of perspectieven (welk)?
Zijn er momenten van frictie of conflict geweest (waardoor, hoe mee omgegaan en effect)?
Vinden er reflectieve sessies plaats met Unplugged (waarom, hoe en effect)?

Zou je zeggen dat je het team van Unplugged vertrouwt/ dat ze betrouwbaar zijn (waarom)?
Zou je zeggen dat Unplugged competent is (waarom)?
Vind je dat Unplugged de juiste aanpak en/of intentie heeft (waarom)?
Ben je toegewijd aan het project met Unplugged?
Ben je eerlijk met Unplugged (waarom)?
Kan je comfortabel samenwerken met Unplugged (waarom)?
Heb je respect voor de mensen bij Unplugged en waarom?
Waardeer je de mening van Unplugged en waarom?

c. Interview guide designers

Unplugged

Wat is jouw rol binnen Unplugged?
Welke taken horen daarbij?
Wat is normaliter de opzet van het team voor projecten?
Hoe is de communicatie met de rest van Unplugged en de heads?
Omschrijf wat de meest waardevolle aspecten zijn die Unplugged biedt aan klanten? (value proposition)
Vind jij persoonlijk dat er andere aspecten zijn die hier nog bij horen?
Wat is jouw aanpak (of elementen) om te zorgen dat je dit kan leveren aan klanten?
Welke waarden zijn belangrijk voor jouw en pas je toe in jouw werk?
Wat is jouw definitie van succes binnen jouw werk en/of werk relaties? (door wat te leveren of doen of krijgen)
Hoe of waaraan meet jij hoe succesvol je bent?
Waarom meet je het daaraan of op die manier? (meten op basis van voorgaande prestatie of visie/desired state)
Hoe word dan succes of voortgang gemeten voor Unplugged?
In een ideale situatie, welke aanpassingen zou je maken aan Unplugged (waarom)? (Voorbeelden: klanten, process, mensen, aanpak,…)

clients & relation (kies project en klant)

Noem een (aantal) klanten waarmee je hebt gewerkt en de gekozen klant?
Had de klant al ervaring met of kennis over het creatieve process? (Voorbeelden: Design Thinking, Double Diamond)
Wat was volgens jou belangrijk voor de klant (hun waarden)?
Als dit verschilt van jouw waarden hoe ging je hier dan mee om?
Wat definieert de klant als succes hebben?
Hoe meten ze volgens jou hun succes/voortgang?
Wat is volgens jou de rol verdeling die de klant verwachte?
Wat waren volgens jou het gedrag en de interactie verwachtingen van de klant? (relatie: hun betrokkenheid)
Wat zijn jouw verwachtingen van de klant bij aanvang van een project?
Heb je eigen doelen voor relatie met de klant vooraf bepaald (welk en hoe bepaald)?
Hoe bepaalde je jou aanpak om om te gaan met de klant en beïnvloed hun process kennis dat?

Worden er duidelijke en meetbare doelen vastgesteld met de klant?
Hoe worden deze bepaald?
Stellen ze altijd de middelen en informatie die jullie nodig hebben vrij?
Als niet, waarom niet?
Ben je eerlijk tegenover de klant?
Waarom wel of waarom niet?
Ben je toegewijd aan de projecten waar je aan werkt?
Waarom wel of niet?
Zou je zeggen dat je de klant vertrouwt of zijn ze betrouwbaar?
Voor welke redenen wel of niet (waarom)?
Hoe pas jij je daarop aan?
Geloof je dat de klant de juiste intentie heeft (wat is dat dan en waarom)?
Heb je respect voor de klant en hun manier van doen (zie je daar de waarde van in)?
Challenge (uitdagen) en inspireer jij de klant?

Als wel, hoe doe je dit?
Spoor je de klant aan om mee te werken, denken en doelen stellen?
Hoe doe je dit?
En waarom doe je dit?
Luisteren klanten normaliter naar jouw advies en waarom wel of niet?
Als niet hoe ga je hier dan mee om, overtuig je hen en zo ja hoezo of komt er een compromis?
Waarom pak je het op die manier aan/ werkt dat normaal gezien?
Hoe stuur je projecten in de juiste richting (voorbeeld)?
Hoe ga je om met conflict (voorbeeld)?
Ben je wel eens de mist in gegaan en hoe heb je dit aangepakt (klant verteld of verstopt,…)?
Is er een reflectie sessie na afloop van een project (zo ja wat is daarvan het doel)?

d. Timeline for designers

Vragen

Welk process zijn jullie doorlopen?
(licht stadia toe met woorden in pijlen)

Wanneer waren er touchpoints met de klant?
(differentieer tussen communicatie en samenwerken met icoontjes)
(licht aub toe wat voor interactie het was. Bv: presentatie of workshop)

Wat waren de taken die jij en de klant uitvoerden?
(Mogelijk een rol toelichten bij touchpoints indien nodig.)

Hoe voelde jij jou tijdens een touchpoint of bij het uitvoeren van een taak?
(gebruik de feeling emojis om dit aan te geven)
(als je het anders wil verwoorden mag je natuurlijk wat typen ipv een emoji gebruiken)

Leg uit bij het gevoel waarom je jou toen zo voelde

Geef aan wanneer reflectie sessies plaats vonden
(Gebruik de nadenken emoji hiervoor en licht kort toe waarover gereflecteerd werd)

Leg uit wat het effect van de sessie op de samenwerking en/of de aanpak was?

Licht toe wat je graag anders had gezien in een ideale situatie
(kan interactie, rol, taak, uitkomst, etc. zijn)

Leg uit waarom je dat zou aanpassen en wat je daarmee zou willen bereiken

Vul hier de basis informatie in door te typen in de post-its

Client: **Process name:** **Team members:**

Team member roles: **Duration:** **Deliverables:**

Je kan deze icons kopiëren en plakken

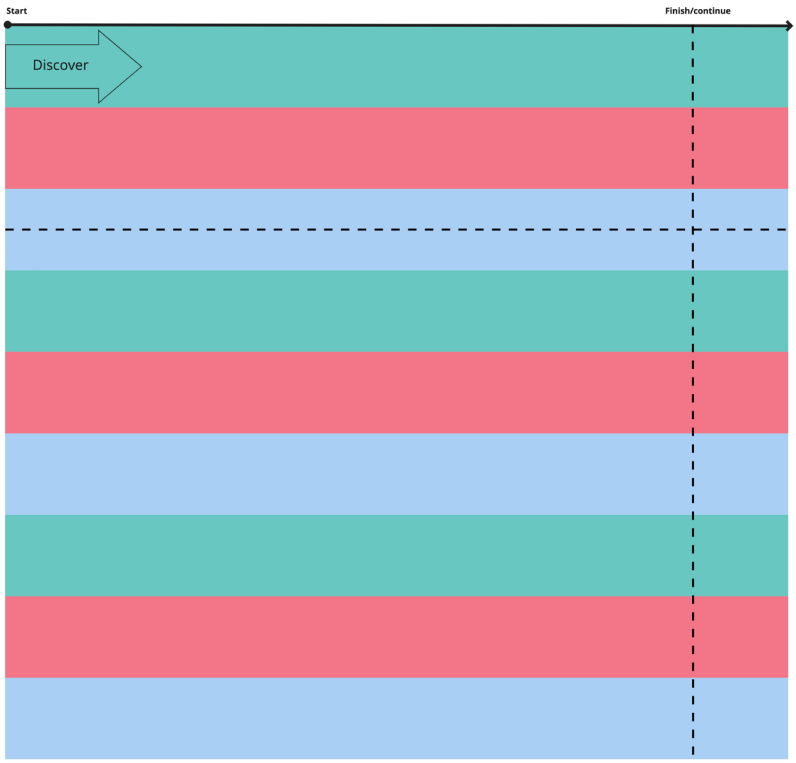
Touchpoints

Communicate

Working together

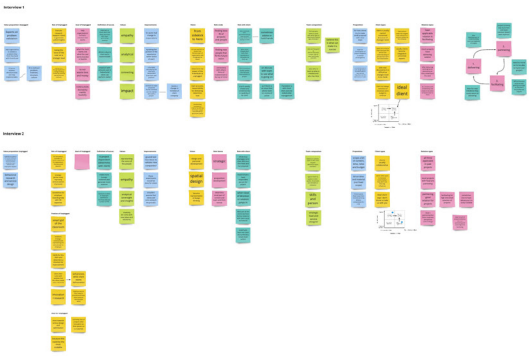
Feelings

Reflection

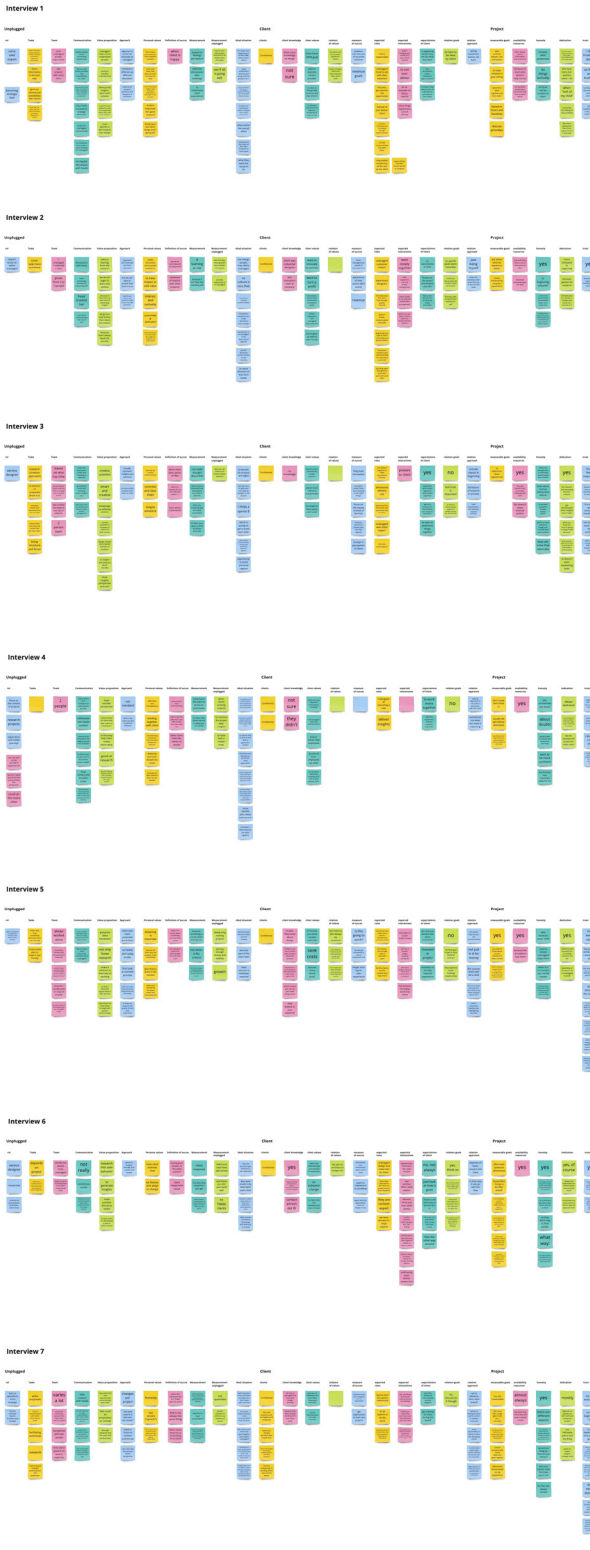


e. Interview transcripts & independent analysis

Interviews heads



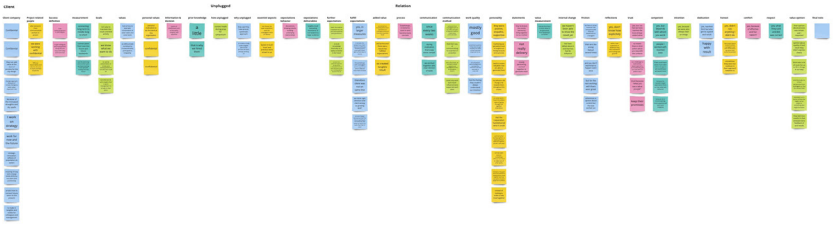
Interviews Unplugged



Interviews clients

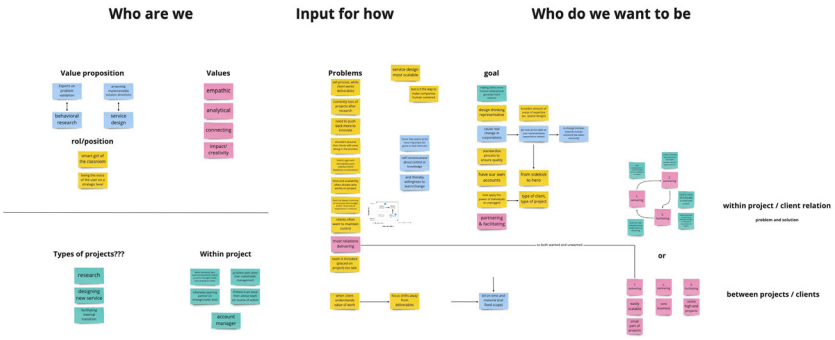
Interview 1

Interview 2

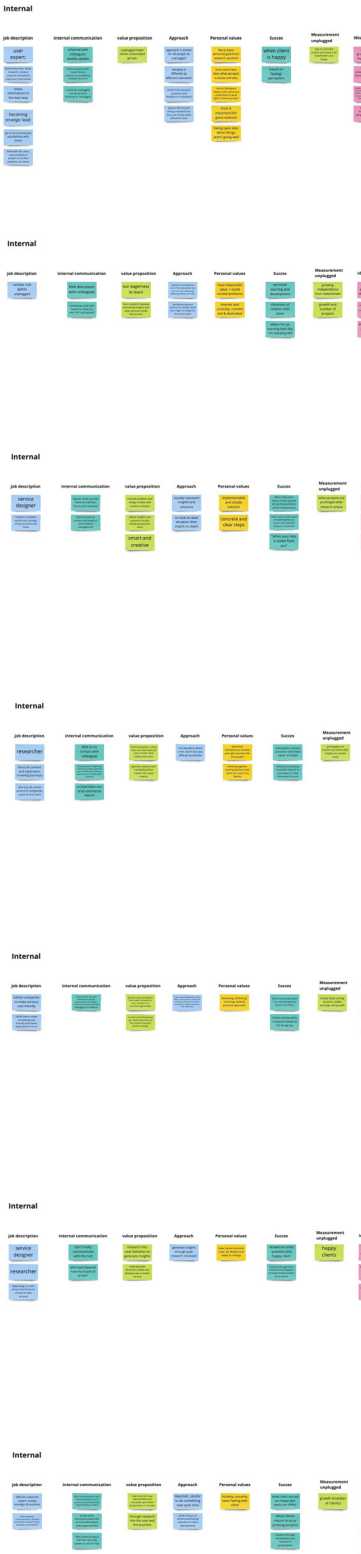


Interview 3

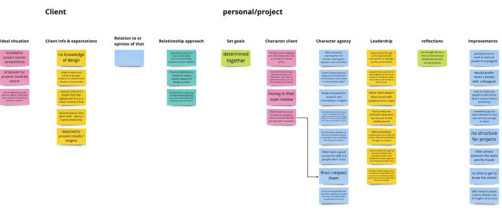
Analysis heads 1

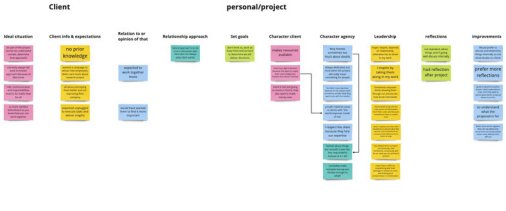


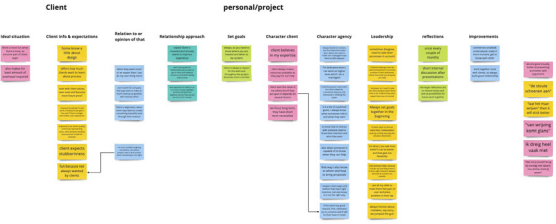
Analysis Unplugged 1

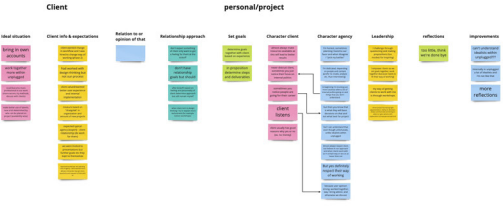


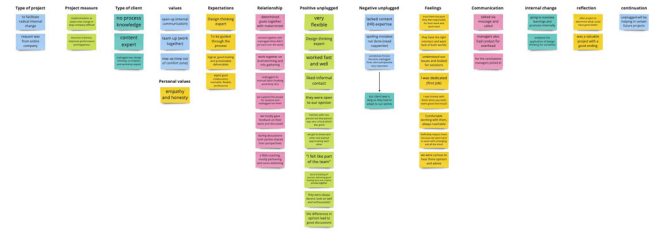
Analysis clients 1

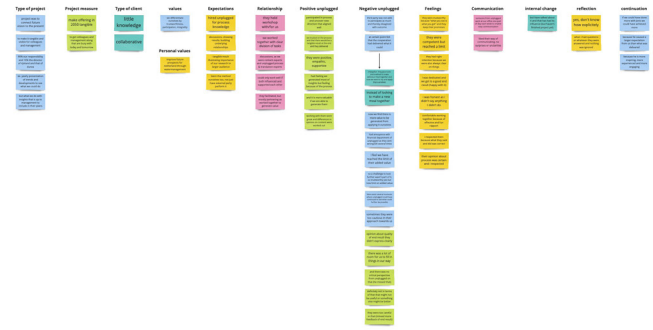




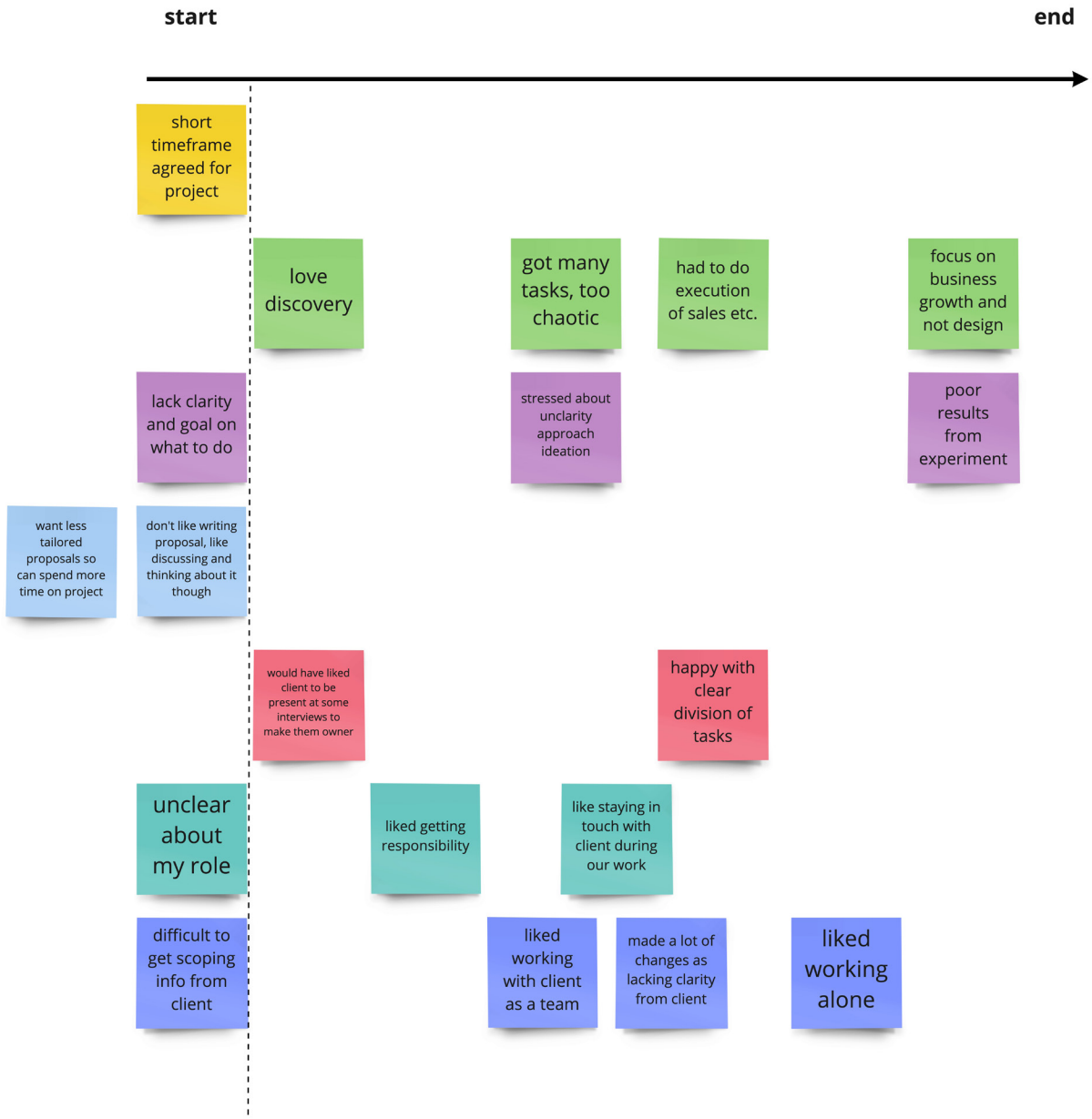




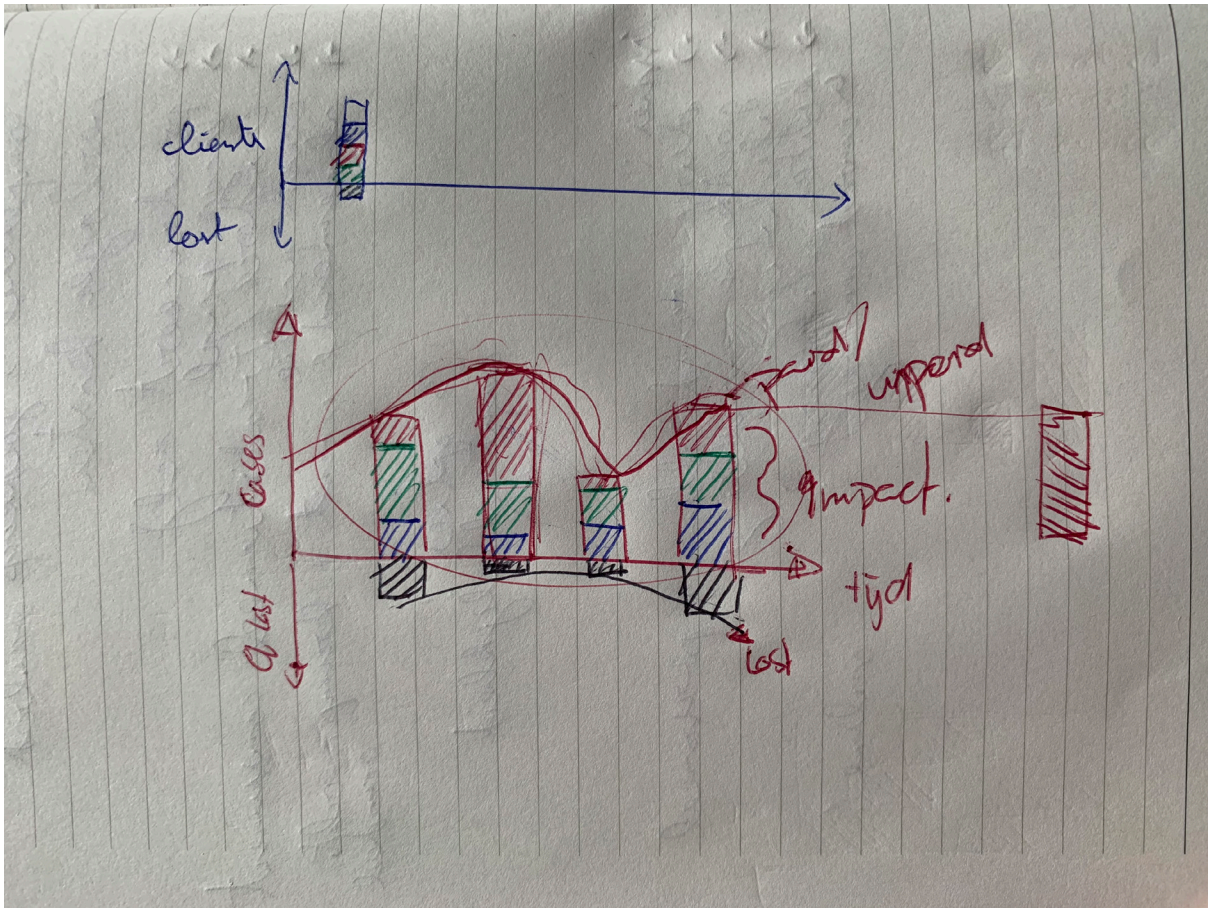


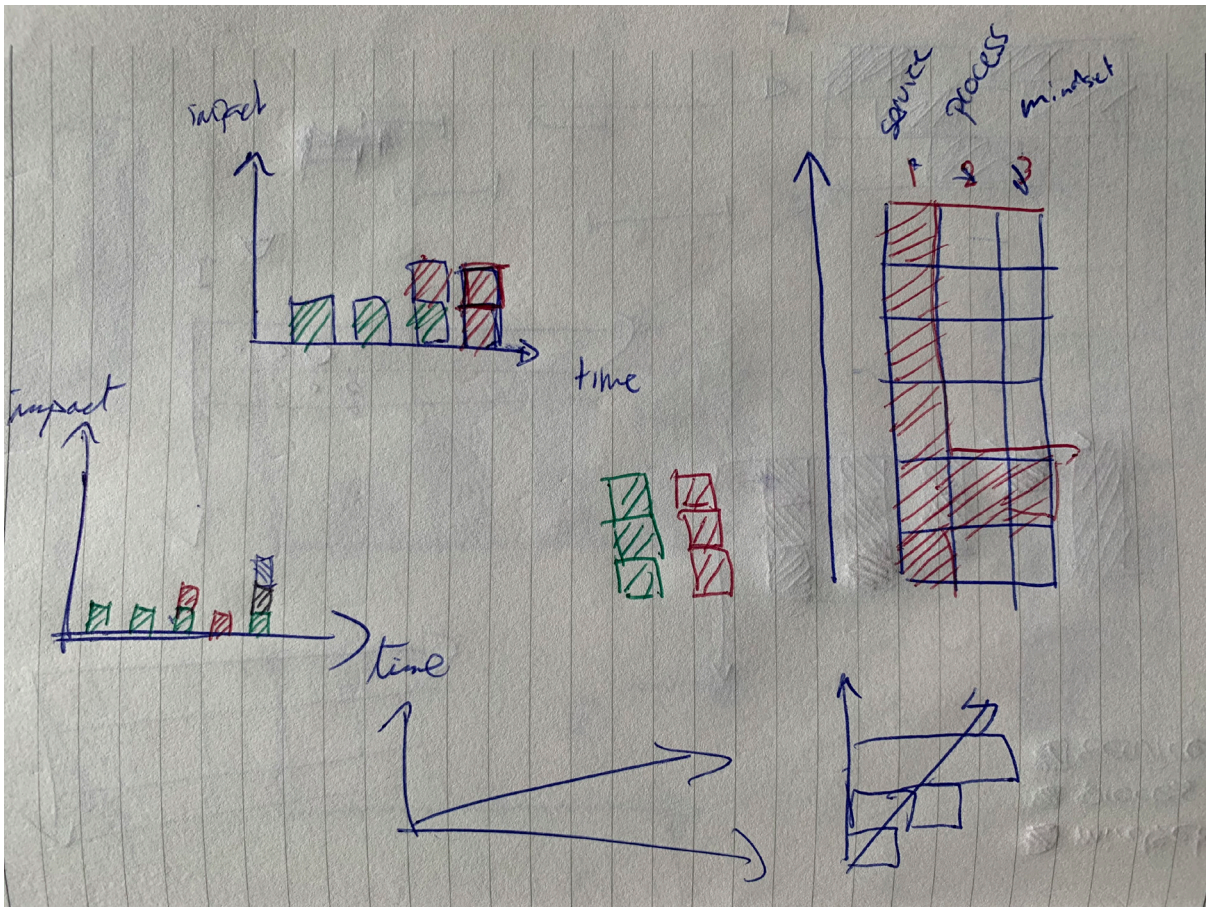


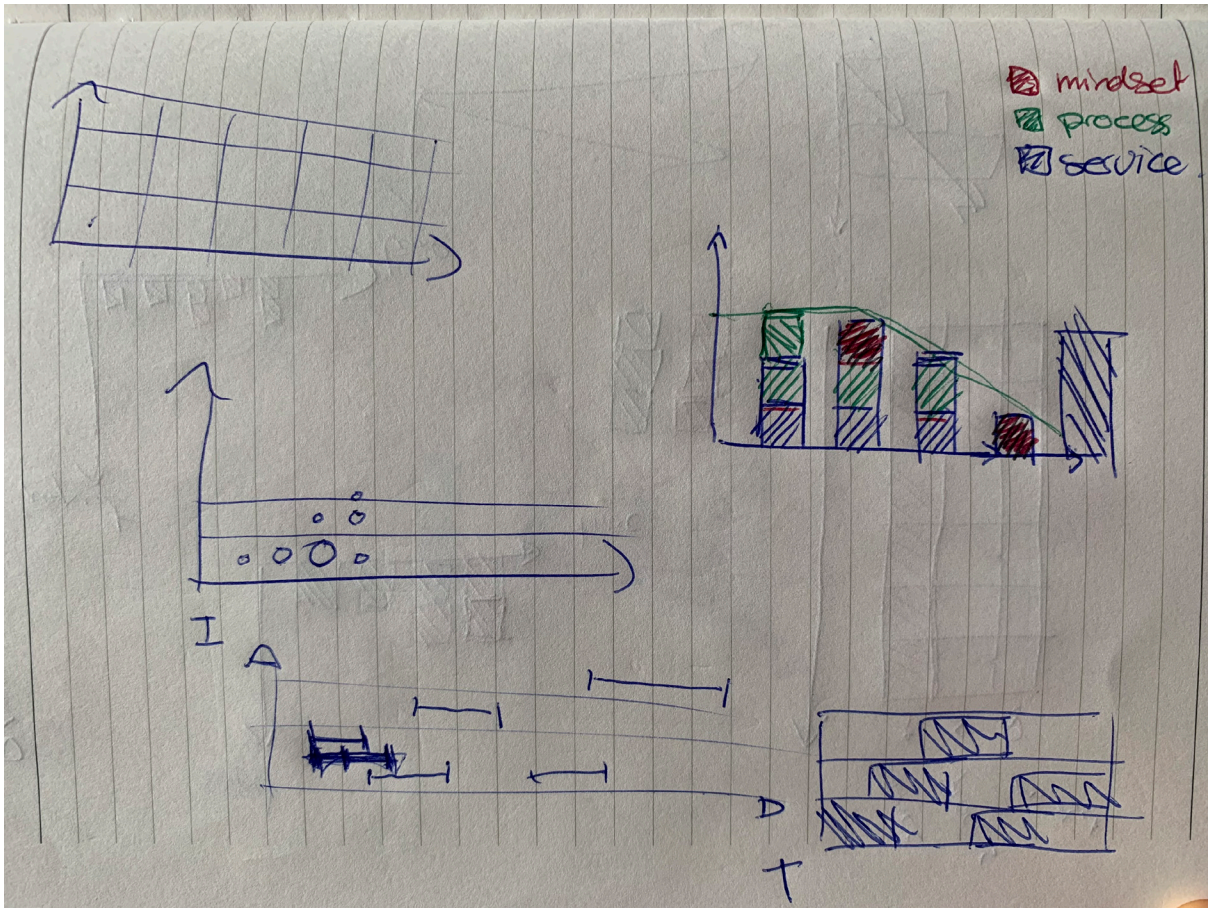
f. Timeline information synthesis



g. Sketches of impact measurement graph iterations



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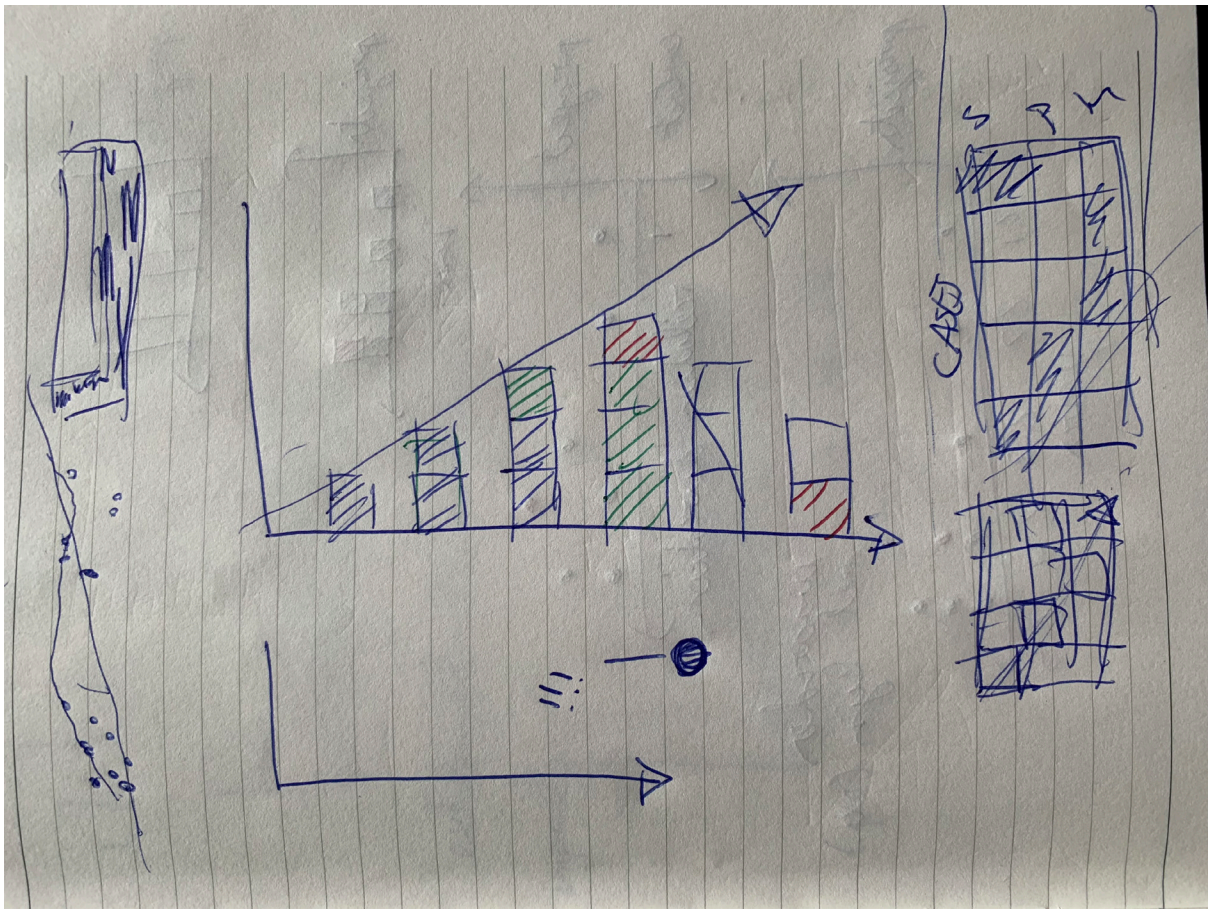
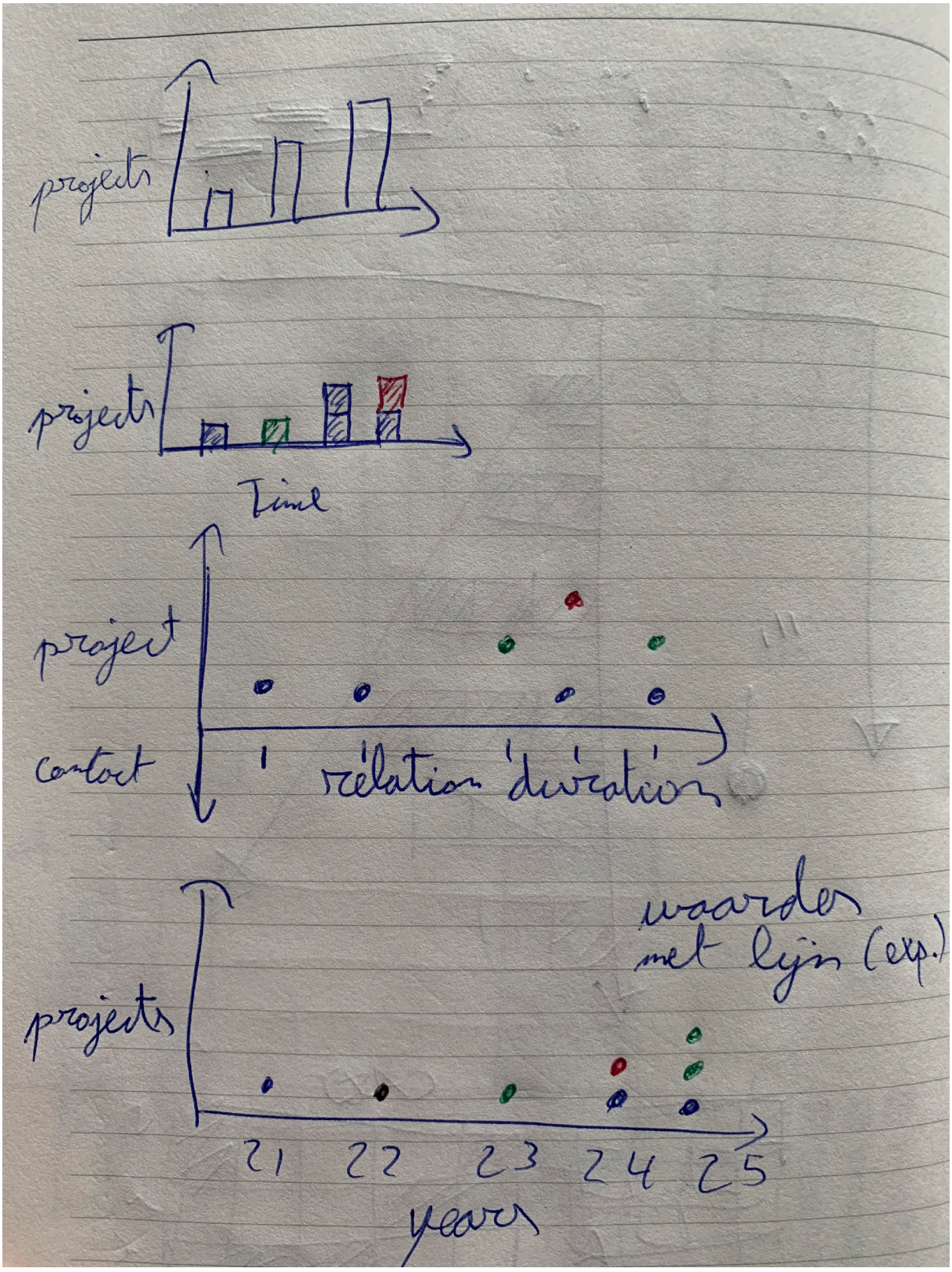
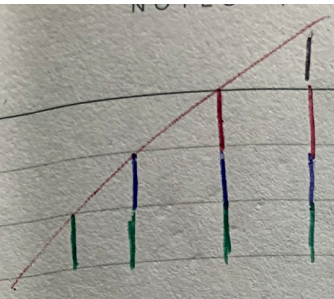
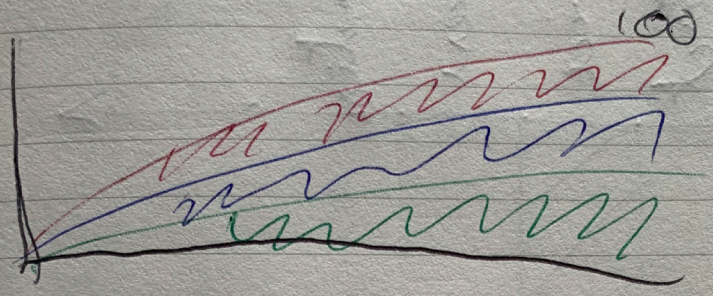
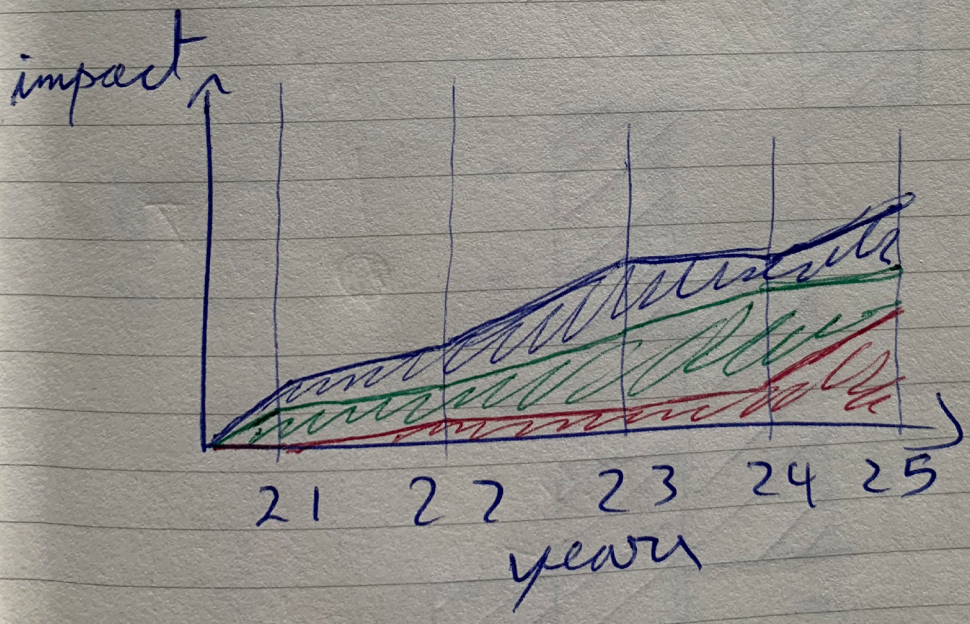

CASD

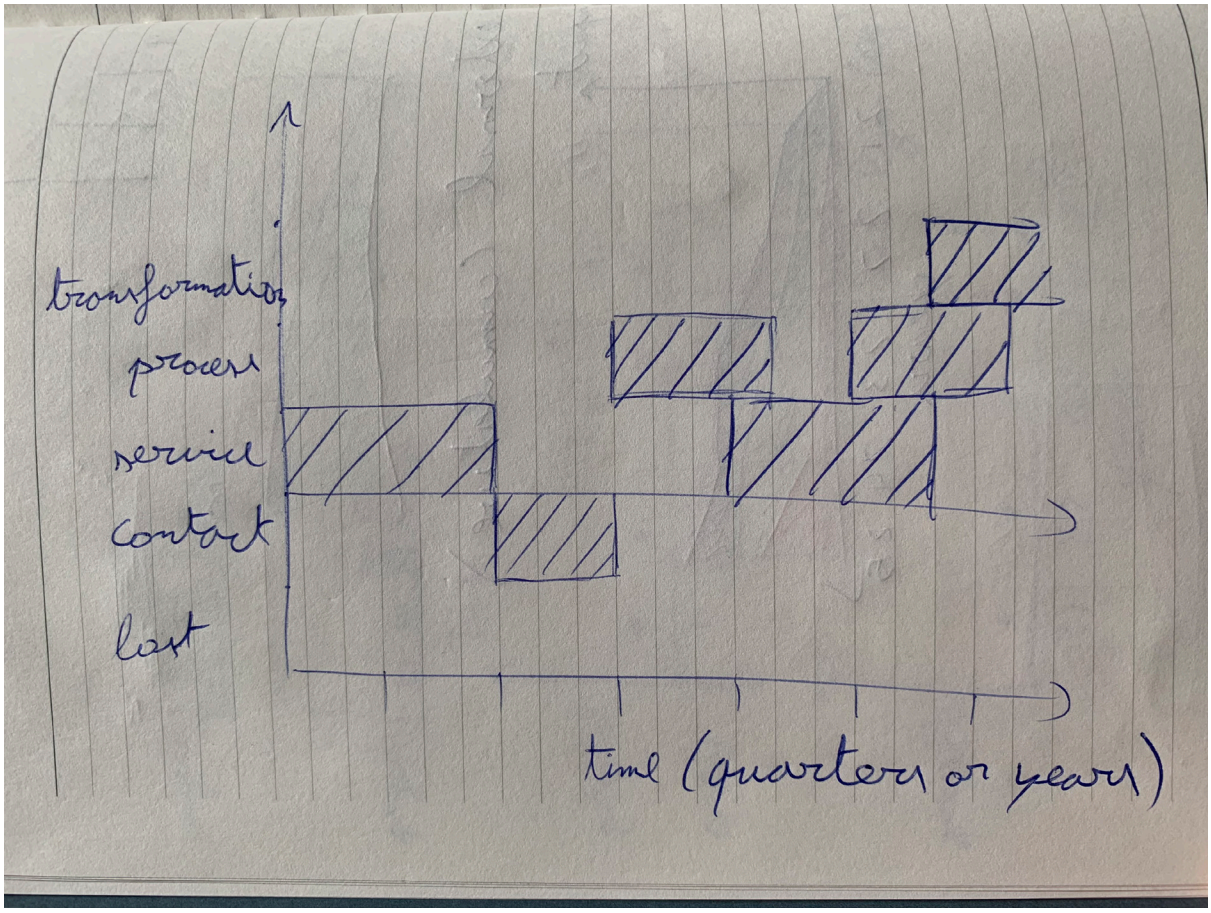

projects
projects
Time
project
contact
relation duration
projects
waarden
met lijn (exp.)
21
22
23
24
25
years





external (cumulative)




transformation
process
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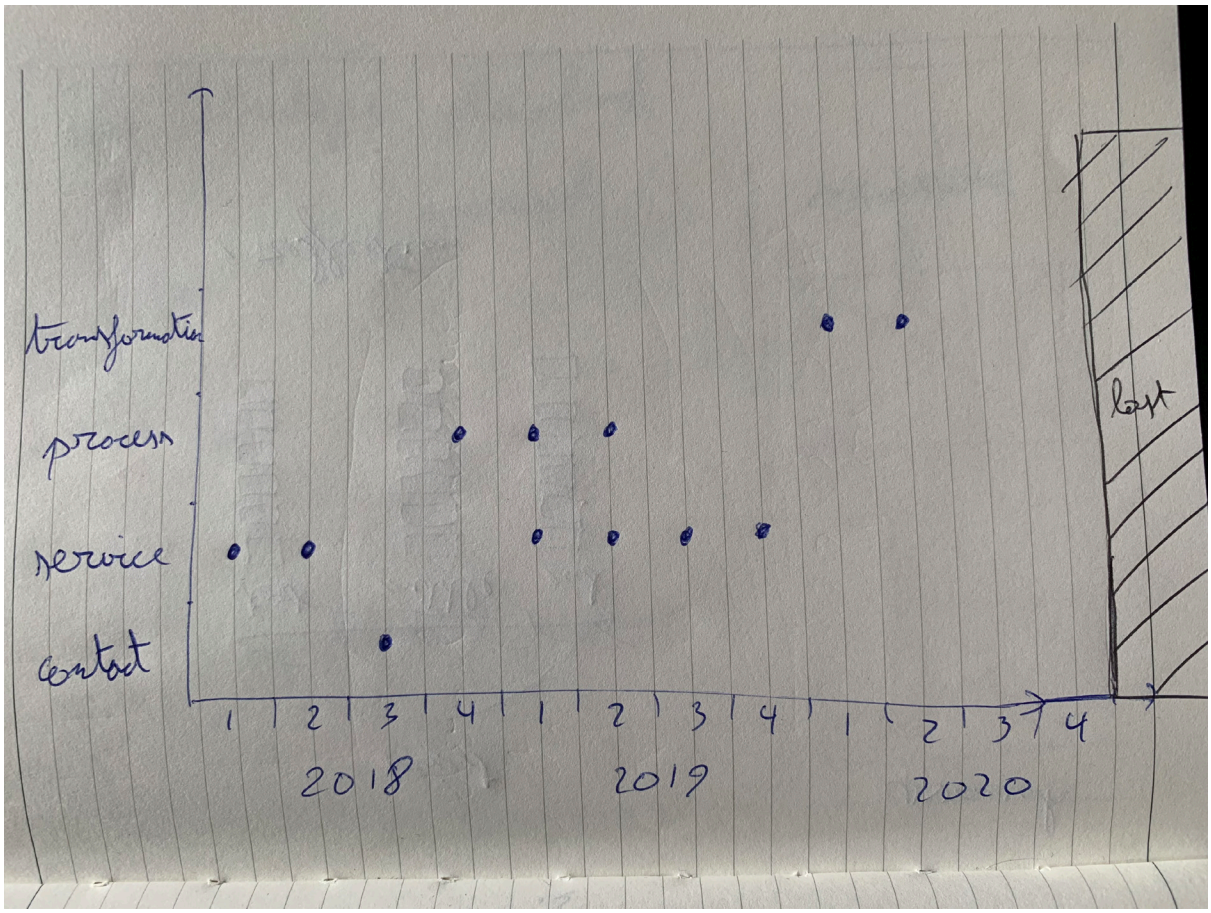
last
time (quarters or years)


transformation
process
service
contact
last
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
2018
2019
2020

h. Workshop materials

The principles game

People make a client:
A) At Unplugged we always focus on understanding the end user and work together with our client to develop the best result.

B) At Unplugged we understand our client's needs and wants and work hard to ensure the best implementable result for the end user.

Get in it for the long run
A) I regularly share relevant current project work with all my clients

B) I regularly call my clients to find out how they are doing

Preach what you practice
A) I frequently joke about ambiguity and use analogies for clarification.

B) Clients find it difficult to keep an open mind. So I shorten the timeframe to resolution.

Be vulnerable
A) At Unplugged we work together with the client to find the most human-centered solution.

B) At Unplugged we represent human-centered innovation and persuade the client to pursue that solution.

Be yourself
A) As experts we need to always be seen to stay ahead of our clients.

B) As leaders we need to challenge our clients on all aspects of the project.

Find common ground
A) We need to align with the clients and persuade them towards the solution.

B) We need to agree with clients on what is the correct way forward to reach a solution.

The case

Part 1

Claudia, the head of the marketing department of the Dutch subsidiary of ABC corporation provides the company background and brief to Unplugged.

Claudia: we at ABC corporation are going through a bit of a rough patch at this time. As the market leader in our segment we've had to deal with the classical competitors (Amazon, Bol, etc.), now also with the Chinese versions of that, as well as recently with specialised online, and offline/physical competitors.

We've been at it for over 20 years, offer a vast assortment and have the industry's preferred in-store service. Yet with all these new competitors we've lost market share. We're invested in almost all European countries and have outposts in the US, Australia and we're even thinking of opening up in south America to drive more revenue.
We do sales online as well, yet we believe that our in-store service is our biggest advantage. Clearly the older people, and families enjoy that most, while the younger generation think they can all do it by themselves with the online return policies.

So since we first met, Joe (from unplugged), when you explained me your agency's novel approach, I thought that maybe you could help us refine our marketing and maybe sales approach. We need to better understand our customer segments and take action.

Joe: thank you Claudia for inviting us and your comprehensive exposé. Indeed we can see from our experience that ABC is in a tough spot. Unplugged has vast experience in customer research and understanding trends, which we'll be happy to put at your disposal.
Before we dive further in the details, may I ask you how you came to ABC recently?

Claudia: Oh, well that's pretty simple, a friendly headhunter in New York contacted me. We knew each other from earlier on in my career when I was in the marketing department of DEF corp. Through their affiliates in Europe he found out about ABC's opening in The Netherlands and thought of me. You know at DEF I addressed their sliding market share issues as well, so there was a natural fit. Though now that I'm here I find the situation in this industry to be rather different, maybe requiring a different, or larger approach. In fact everything is a bit different here from New York. Especially the children have had it a bit difficult, with me on the road most of the time… thank god I found a good 'kinder-opvang'.

Joe: well you've taken on a lot at the same time, new job, new industry, new country, new continent, new language and culture…. and I very well understand the 'kinder-opvang' issue. My wife and I thank goodness found a very good place for both our toddlers - they're very flexible there so I can pick them up at different hours. So if we can help lighten the load a bit, so much the better.
We love these types of challenges and will do a deep dive over the next weeks to, as I see it, find out what your target customers really want, and how ABC should address these.

Joe: that leaves the question of how we'll be working together, who in ABC do you want us to meet and when will we be reporting back to you?

Claudia: well I'd like my team to be fully integrated in the process, though they are very busy already so please take that into account. As for who from ABC to meet, I'd like for you and me to spend some time with my boss, so that he gets an appreciation of what we're doing.

Joe: that sounds like a great idea, we'll start putting everything together right away and hold the team kick-off meeting next week.

Claudia: great, that sounds good.

Over the next weeks Joe and the team conduct the customer behavioural research, propose a number of service improvement directions, and get the green light to run tests on one particular service improvement.

Part 2

Service improvement test-case result evaluation meeting.

Claudia: Hello Joe, hello team from Unplugged. Welcome everyone to this status meeting regarding the service implementation. I would like to introduce the colleagues around the table whom I've invited to join today: on my right is Jan-Jaap, he is the assistant innovation director from HQ. I believe it is important that Jan-Jaap sees the result of this test case as he looks for innovation across the whole corporation.

Then next to Jan-Jaap is Maartje, our creative director, next to her is Joop assistant to the Managing Director of the Dutch subsidiary. Then Jaqueline and Dirk you know from the team meetings.

Joe: thank you Claudia, and thank you all for joining us today. I'm joined by John, our Strategic lead and Jane our Service designer today.
I would like to start off by going briefly over the reasons behind the new service, show you the positive results and learnings, and then discuss the possibilities for ABC to further address the market share situation.

…. the presentation ensues…

Claudia: thank you Joe and team for your comprehensive presentation. I'd like to open the discussion up for everyone.

Jan-Jaap (a rather outspoken upstart): indeed thank you for your presentation, and congratulations Claudia for those positive results from the test-case. I'd like to ask a question on the what next: as I'm new to this team I might be a bit off centre on this one however it seems to me that each of the possibilities you propose have a very different impact, not only on the market share problem but also on the company resources. Option 1 seems rather manageable, yet options two and three require significant changes of our IT systems, and supply chain. Have you considered that.

Joe: yes, indeed they do have an effect that has to be reckoned with. Option two on a medium scale and option three quite significantly. Yet the insights we have gathered from the users show a real trend in that direction. Thereby, the test results have only increased our certainty of their need for those innovations. These options

cater to the insights and test results gathered as to significantly increase and solidify your marketshare in the future.

Joop (a boyish looking MBA from Rotterdam Business School): Thank you, it seems to me that the cost of options two and three are rather high with regards to the budget for the next years. What doesn't help Claudia , is that we've just got the budget approved and so we'd have to re-discuss them …

Claudia: yes I understand but let's not forget that at this time we're still in the mode of possibilities, and we need to recognise the seriousness of our challenge.

Joop: that might be true but let's think it trough before doing anything, you know how the boss doesn't like surprises

Claudia smiles knowingly.

Claudia: Maartje do you have any questions?

Maartje: it's not really my field of expertise. Maybe I should wait for the end results.

Joe: what we propose to do next is to put further detail and costing on each of the options and share those with you soon.

Claudia: that sounds good Joe. Can I assume that we'll do that as a team together?

Joe: absolutely, I wouldn't have it any other way. We'll be needing input from finance, production and logistics as well.

Part 3

Presentation on the learnings of the test-case and options for ABC.

Claudia: hello and welcome to all of you. I'd like to especially welcome: on my left Gerbrand, Gerbrand is the CFO of the dutch subsidiary. Next to him is our COO, Dirk-Huib, the longest serving member of the executive team. And at the end of the table is Jonathan our HQ Innovation Director. Joop and Jan-Jaap you remember from last time.
Thank you all for joining us, we will present to you the outcome of our dutch service test-case and discuss the implications and options going forward.
Let me start by sharing the results with you, and then Joe will take over to discuss the rest.

- and Claudia launches straight in. Presents the test-case and after a few explanatory questions hands over to Joe.

Joe: thank you Claudia and thank you all for taking the time to join us here.
It's a pleasure to present you the options ahead of you based on the encouraging results from the test case. We also thank the many people from ABC corp. who have provided us with invaluable information from finance, accounting, HR, logistics and production.

- Joe presents the options in light of the insights and results gathered from the users, the growth towards the vision and the resources necessary to implement them.

Claudia: thank you Joe, that was most enlightening.

Dirk-Huib: thank you Joe, but I don't see how one subsidiary can implement any of these options in a stand alone way? It would essentially break that subsidiary away from the company given all the supply chain, IT and Training/Hiring/Organisational requirements.

Before Joe can answer… Jonathan (a rather flamboyant creative with a background in customer electronics): but can't you see Dirk-Huib, we are having the cheese eaten from our sandwiches out there in the marketplace, now is not the time to start throwing up road blocks. We need to grab the bull by the horns and start on a path of fundamental change and bring ABC back to its undisputed leadership position…

Dirk-Huib: let's be realistic, I understand you're excited by all the innovative work that has to be done. But we have to bring in the budget, year on year, every year. This is a going concern, not a workshop for creatives.

Dirk-Huib: I can see however that the test case is bringing much needed results and that for starters is a very good thing

Gerbrand (a hard-nosed, no-nonsense dollars and cents man): Joe, let me ask you a question. You said that under option one, we'll still lose market share in key demographics… right? Joe nods affirmative. Option two gives us a better chance of remaining a key player, but not the market leader? again Joe nods. So what you're really proposing is option 3? and again…affirmative.
So we start with a Dutch subsidiary marketing study and end up with option three…

Gerbrand sighs…and mutters under his breath 'ah external agencies…'

Gerbrand: we need to take this off-line….

Claudia: indeed we started this in the Netherlands as a test case. Yet the results are very encouraging. And that is just on a limited segment basis. I've spoken to my counterparts in our largest European markets and they're all very intrigued. Clearly there are issues above my pay-grade at play here, yet I want to reiterate the reality of the actual success of the test-case.

Dirk-Huib: I agree with Claudia and I agree with Gerbrand, we need to reflect on this at another level.

Jonathan: I agree Dirk-Huib this requires further discussion and a deeper appreciation of the challenges.

Claudia: thank you all for joining this meeting. Thank you Joe and the whole team for the excellent work you've done.

— after the meeting —

Joe: well that was a bit of a shocker Claudia?

Claudia: yes, they're all quite direct, and I think they are now realising the extent of the actual problem.
Either they're scared, you know the proverbial deer in the headlights or … well I don't know… what do you think we should do next Joe….

i. Project brief

Personal Project Brief - IDE Master Graduation

TU Delft

Designing a strategy to lead client relations with integrity — project title

Please state the title of your graduation project (above) and the start date and end date (below). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

start date 08 - 02 - 2021 — 09 - 07 - 2021 end date

INTRODUCTION **

Please describe, the context of your project, and address the main stakeholders (interests) within this context in a concise yet complete manner. Who are involved, what do they value and how do they currently operate within the given context? What are the main opportunities and limitations you are currently aware of (cultural- and social norms, resources (time, money,...), technology, ...).

The design agency Unplugged is part of an affiliate of agencies under the umbrella company Makerstreet. These agencies are what they call full-specialism as each is specialized in a specific area. Unplugged itself falls under the Innovation bureaus (innovate for the future, with product, service or business model), which is one of the categories besides design (improve product or service and touch base with customers), development (build apps and websites), interim (detach digital pro's to work in-house) and marketing (make campaigns, virals, videos and animations). The differentiating factor of Unplugged from the other two agencies that fall under 'Innovation' is their future oriented and human centered approach. They use this to create insight, understanding and action by designing customer, employee and organisational experiences. From their own vision:
At Unplugged we mix the knowledge of behavioral experts, designers and strategists.
They hit the right chords with organizations and people to see and believe in opportunities.
With this arrangement, we encourage action and make companies and organizations more people-oriented and more successful.

The set up of this affiliate of agencies has caused Unplugged to fall in a more execution of research tasks role. This partially because of the way in which the client acquisition is done. As all companies fall under Makerstreet, Unplugged does not do their own client acquisition or client relation management. However, they are going through a transition to become more independent by fostering their own client relations and delivering full proposals instead of mostly insights.

Furthermore, there are factors at play which cause a certain dynamic in the relationship with clients they work with, such as a short track record, small size (~11 people) and young average employee age (~30 years). This causes there to be biases from the clients in some cases and when there is a lack of understanding, a tendency of clients to take control of the process. All in all, meaning that Unplugged believes both the process and the outcome can be optimized. Thereby, the extent of conformity currently shown to clients wants, has had a negative impact on the project as the designers haven't had enough autonomy to create and deliver value. However, the perspective of the client hasn't been taken into account yet and the role of Unplugged is currently changing.

As previously stated, the company is going through a transition where besides fostering their own relations they also intend to change their processes. Hereby, I see an opportunity in gathering insights from the clients perspective, the employees who are going through the transition and advice from my chair Rebecca Price who specializes in corporate transitions. Possibly, allowing me to create a strategic advice which can be tested and iterated upon as part of their transition. As Giulia Calabretta, my mentor, has experience in consultancy and also specializes in management this will allow me to gain advice for my proposal on how to manage their stakeholders.

However, a limiting factor that will play a role throughout my project is the lockdown, as that keeps me from working full-time at the Unplugged office where I could experience the environment first hand and meet clients in person. Also, this will most likely limit my time with their clients and has limited the amount of clients that Unplugged is working with at the moment. Furthermore, as client relations happens outside of Unplugged, it might be difficult to reach the people in charge to find out more about the strategy they apply for client acquisition and retention.

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introduction (continued): space for images

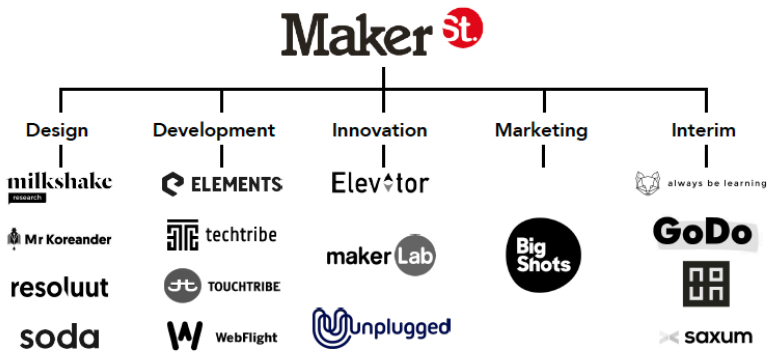


image / figure 1: Makerstreet corporate structure

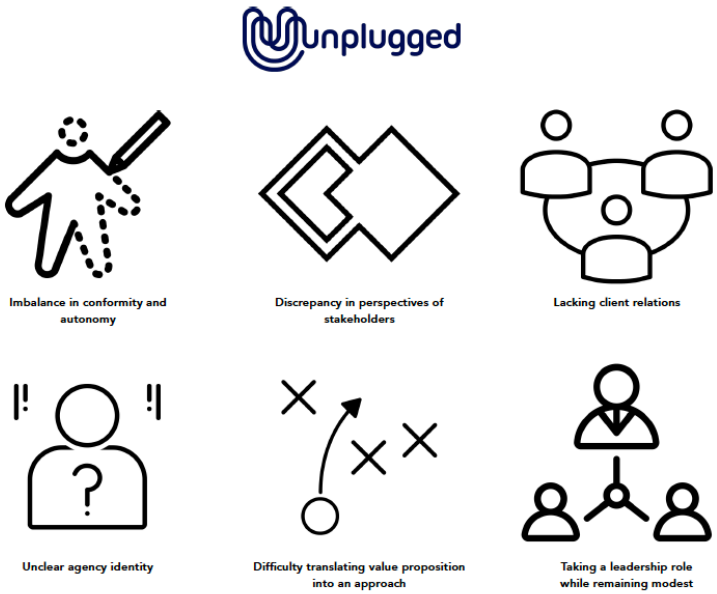


image / figure 2: Unplugged problem space/context

PROBLEM DEFINITION **

Limit and define the scope and solution space of your project to one that is manageable within one Master Graduation Project of 30 EC (= 20 full time weeks or 100 working days) and clearly indicate what issue(s) should be addressed in this project.

Scope:
Managing clients and projects in a (young) design consultancy such as Unplugged has proven to come with certain challenges. The versatile group of designers is qualified in the work they intend to do for the client but not necessarily in managing clients and projects. Thereby, clients tend to express too much dominance over the project which disrupts the process and hampers the quality of the outcome. This ultimately caused by the imbalance between designer autonomy and client conformity. Hence, Unplugged has now defined their value proposition but does not yet have an approach through which to deliver it that alleviates them from the afore mentioned problems.

Problem:
The problem is that Unplugged (young design agency) is currently being lead by their clients during projects. Now they have defined a clear value proposition, but do not know how that translates into an approach that allows them to take the lead in their projects with clients.

Solution space:
The solution space will consist of a strategy playbook for Unplugged's client management during projects that keeps them true to who they are (integrity) and allows them to lead the projects. This will need to include the perspectives of the stakeholders, of which most importantly Unplugged their clients. This to be combined with literature on the balance between designer autonomy and client conformity, stakeholder management, service design leadership. Ultimately having Unplugged lead projects with a consistent approach that keeps them true to their identity and thus allows them to deliver the value they intend to.

ASSIGNMENT **

State in 2 or 3 sentences what you are going to research, design, create and / or generate, that will solve (part of) the issue(s) pointed out in "problem definition". Then illustrate this assignment by indicating what kind of solution you expect and / or aim to deliver, for instance: a product, a product-service combination, a strategy illustrated through product or product-service combination ideas, ... In case of a Specialisation and/or Annotation, make sure the assignment reflects this/these.

I will conduct interviews to understand the context of Unplugged together with their current approach to projects (from their perspective and that of their clients). I will conduct a literature review on the balance between designer autonomy and client conformity, client management, service design leadership. Experts will be interviewed as inspiration. These activities will allow me to create a strategy playbook for Unplugged to attain client leadership with integrity.

For this project the five step User-Centered Design (UCD) approach will be applied. Starting with the first step, Front-end user research (1), I will be discovering the context through semi-structured interviews with Unplugged and their clients, while also observing their internal interactions by taking part in meetings, working at the office and becoming part of the team. Afterwards, for the defining step, with the information gathered I will be able to define (2) the group values, problems, process, context, interactions with clients and the clients perspective. Synthesizing the knowledge gathered of the team and clients, I will create (3) a strategy to their context with inspiration from the literature and expert interviews (seasoned consultants). This strategy will then be prototyped (4) through the creation of scenarios as to allow for evaluation of use (5) with the designers at Unplugged and their clients. The results of these tests will give me the necessary insights to make the final alterations to the strategy and translate it into a workshop with Unplugged to ensure implementability (alleviating the UCD limitation as stated in the Delft Design Guide).

The strategy proposal will consist of a playbook detailing an strategy for Unplugged's client leadership with supporting visual materials as clarification and visual representation of the textual content. If deemed necessary, a vision will be included to portray the intended relations with clients. This may also be integrated in a roadmap if it is determined that the proposed changes are to take place in several stages (or changes in the strategy are to be made as the company evolves).

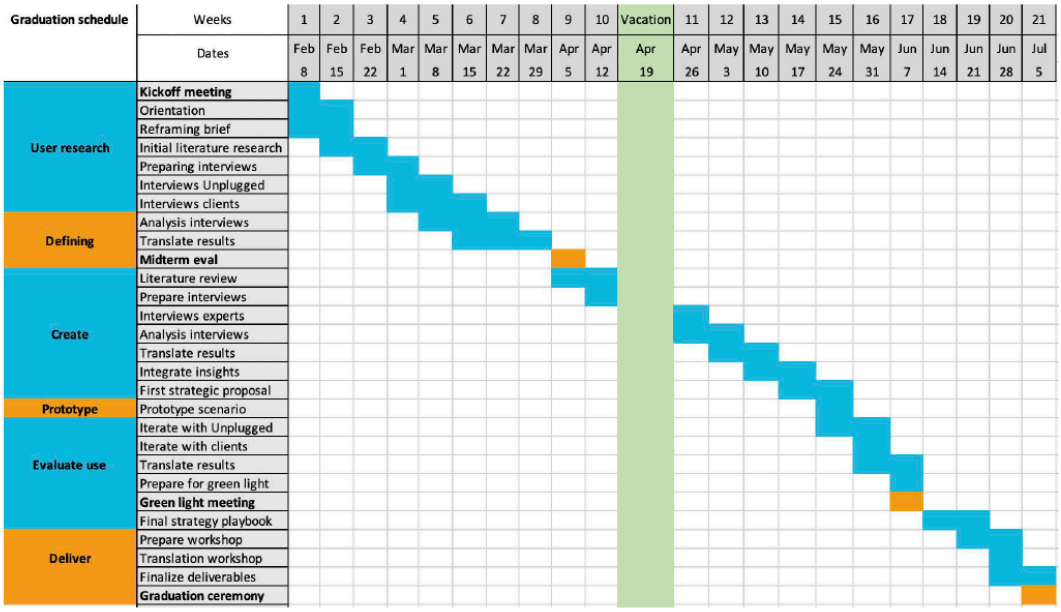
Initials & Name G.R.J.K. Kuhfus [redacted]

Title of Project Designing a strategy to lead client relations with integrity

PLANNING AND APPROACH **

Include a Gantt Chart (replace the example below - more examples can be found in Manual 2) that shows the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings, and how you plan to spend your time. Please note that all activities should fit within the given net time of 30 EC = 20 full time weeks or 100 working days, and your planning should include a kick-off meeting, mid-term meeting, green light meeting and graduation ceremony. Illustrate your Gantt Chart by, for instance, explaining your approach, and please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any, for instance because of holidays or parallel activities.

start date 8 - 2 - 2021 9 - 7 - 2021 end date



The kickoff meeting will take place on the 8th of February 2021. During this day I will get all necessary materials and orientation to be able to start the project. In the first two weeks the focus will be on getting to know the team, understanding the transition Unplugged is going through, the client acquisition set up at Makerstreet, opening a line of communication with the clients of Unplugged and some initial research to orient myself for the interviews to come.

Afterwards I will conduct the interviews to understand the problem space. The results will then be defined to clearly communicate the context and problem space at the midterm evaluation on the 9th of April 2021.

With the context defined, I will delve into the literature to get an overview of the theoretical solution space (strategies). Besides that, I will conduct expert interviews (seasoned design consultants) to get their take on the strategies that worked for them throughout their career. This will provide me with a practical solution space. With the problem space and solution space defined, I can then create the strategic proposal for Unplugged. The first version of the strategy will be evaluated with Unplugged and their clients through scenario testing. Afterwards the necessary changes will be made and all materials prepared for the Green light meeting on the 10th of June 2021.

Finally, the final strategic proposal will be drawn up and a workshop will be held to make the proposal actionable for the designers at Unplugged. This stage has been labeled 'deliver' and was added to the User-Centered Design approach to alleviate the limitations described in the Delft Design Guide (no guarantee of implementability). All materials (ex. thesis, visuals and vision) will then be finalized and in the last week the materials for the graduation ceremony on the 9th of July 2021 will be prepared. The project will take 21 weeks due to 5 national holiday days.

MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS

Explain why you set up this project, what competences you want to prove and learn. For example: acquired competences from your MSc programme, the elective semester, extra-curricular activities (etc.) and point out the competences you have yet developed. Optionally, describe which personal learning ambitions you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project, such as: in depth knowledge a on specific subject, broadening your competences or experimenting with a specific tool and/or methodology, ... Stick to no more than five ambitions.

Competencies to prove and learn:

Having gone from a Bachelor in Industrial Design Engineering to a Master in Strategic Product Design, I hope to prove my capability to generate a strategy that takes into account the perspectives of all stakeholders and thereby when implemented benefits all of them. I setup this specific project because it is about human systems and relations which is an area in which I would like to enrich my knowledge base. This existing knowledge on human relations and management coming from my personal experiences, roles within project teams and communication with clients during my studies. Furthermore, I want to test my own stakeholder management skills during this project with my supervisory team, Unplugged, their clients and the experts. Thereby, also learning from the insights and solutions generated during the project.
The young design agency, Unplugged, interests me because I myself am interested in working as a consultant and doing this project for them will give me a glance of what their jobs look like on a day to day basis. I also took the Design Consultancy Practice course to learn more about consultancy and how to setup your own in the past semester, hoping to build on that knowledge. Further, I have setup my own startup as part of the Build Your Startup course and hope to prove my adaptability and versatility of skills from my education, personal experiences and that venture in this project.

Ambitions:

To create a simple and clear solution to the complex set of problems caused by human relations.

To create an implementable strategy, as to actually generate value for Unplugged and later myself as a consultant.

To learn about human centered design from a consultancy perspective and how insights from end users are translated for the client.

To clearly communicate with and manage the stakeholders involved in my graduation project.

Apply mosaic thinking to create a holistic strategy that takes into account all individual factors (Zooming in on issues, looking at their solution space and then zooming out again to look at its relation/effect on other issues. Repeating this process until all issues are resolved).

FINAL COMMENTS

In case your project brief needs final comments, please add any information you think is relevant.