

Personal development within Essense

Designing an AI-mediated personal
development system for Essense

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This thesis is about creating the conditions under which people can grow — and writing it asked the same of me. There is a particular irony in spending a hundred days designing a system to make personal development sustainable for others while learning, in real time, how difficult sustained development is to hold onto under pressure. The subject was never abstract to me; it was the discipline the project itself demanded.

What began as a request from Essense to resolve dissatisfaction around personal development became, for me, an exercise in committing to a direction before certainty arrives, in following evidence rather than instinct, and in building structure around my own way of thinking rather than against it. The system documented here is the visible outcome. The less visible one is a clearer understanding of the kind of designer I want to be. I am grateful to my supervisory team, Giulia Calabretta and Steven Flipse, for their guidance and for pushing me — at the midterm in particular — to take a stance and defend it rather than wait for the data to decide on my behalf. That challenge shaped both the project and me. To everyone at Essense and Eidra: thank you for opening your organisation to this research.

I am especially grateful to Kim and Charlaine, thank you for initiating this project, for believing it was worth doing properly, and for the mentorship, trust, and support you offered throughout — it made a real difference. To Sander and Chris for their time and trust in validating the work. To the employees who gave their honest experiences in the interviews, the co-creation sessions, and the user tests: this thesis is built entirely on what you were willing to share, and without your candour about what does not work, none of what follows would have been grounded in anything real. To the wider Essense team — thank you for the warm welcome; you made the experience not only productive but genuinely enjoyable.

Finally, to my family and friends — thank you for the patience, the perspective, and for reminding me to step out of my own head when the chaos got loud.

I hope this work gives Essense something genuinely useful, and that it carries forward the belief at its centre: that people are already willing to grow, and what they need is simply somewhere to put that willingness.

Rosalie Ira van Alphen
Delft, 2026

Essense — a creative agency of approximately 50 employees operating within the Eidra consultancy collective — holds a high standard for employee experience, and the experience of personal development within the company was not meeting it. This thesis investigates why, and designs a response. Through a literature review, document analysis, and eight in-depth employee interviews analysed against the COM-B model, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory, the research arrives at a single diagnostic conclusion: personal development at Essense does not fail for lack of motivation or skill. Employees hold a strong, consistent growth mindset. It fails for lack of environmental architecture.

Three structural conditions, each coined and defined in this thesis, describe the failure: the Temporal Gap — the period between yearly check-in moments during which development is entirely crowded out by client work; the Blank Page Problem — the cognitive paralysis that occurs when employees face development without structure, examples, or scaffolding; and To-Do Fatigue — the experience of personal development as yet another administrative burden on an already overloaded task list. Together, these conditions ensure that even motivated employees default to compliance rather than growth. The diagnostic conclusion shifts the design problem from a question of motivation to one of architecture: because PD tasks — reflection, goal-setting, planning — are effortful System 2 activities, a system that reduces their cognitive cost to the point of habit is not a convenience but a structural necessity.

The design response, developed through co-creation with employees and a Harris profile evaluation, is an AI-mediated personal development system — the Invisible Agent — that operates inside the tools employees already use. Tracking is automatic. Reflection offers structure rather than a blank field. Time is protected within the existing calendar. The employee faces not a blank page but a ready-to-go system that carries the administrative weight itself, freeing their existing motivation to go into development rather than into sustaining the structure around it. The system was prototyped as a fully functional environment across Notion and Google Calendar, tested with four Essense employees, and validated with both Essense and Eidra. Every feature is traceable to a specific behavioural barrier; every design decision is grounded in the empirical evidence of what structurally prevents personal development from taking root.

This thesis documents the research and design process underlying the development of a personal development system for Essense, a creative agency operating within the Eidra consultancy collective. It is structured according to the Double Diamond framework (Design Council, 2005), which organises the project into four sequential phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. Each phase is reflected in the chapter structure of the report, and the transition between phases is explicitly marked at the close of each diamond stage.

The thesis is divided into four parts, each corresponding to a phase of the Double Diamond:

Part A — Discover establishes the contextual and methodological foundation of the project. Chapter 1 introduces the strategic relevance of personal development and the organisational context of Essense and Eidra. Chapter 2 orients the problem space, identifying the core friction that the project sets out to resolve. Chapter 3 documents the full methodological framework — the research questions, the Double Diamond structure, and the custom-designed protocol for each research method. Readers primarily interested in the design outcomes rather than the research process may read Chapters 1 and 2 in full and consult Chapter 3 selectively.

Part B — Define presents the evidence base from which the design direction is drawn. Chapter 4 documents the literature review and the theoretical frameworks — COM-B, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory — that structure the analysis throughout the thesis. Chapter 5 presents the field research findings: the document analysis and interview results, synthesised into a behavioural diagnosis. Chapter 6 translates that diagnosis into five validated design requirements and a definitive design challenge. These three chapters constitute the academic core of the thesis and are essential reading for understanding the rationale behind every design decision that follows.

Part C — Develop documents the transition from requirements to concept and from concept to prototype. Chapter 7 details the co-creation session and the multi-stage synthesis that produced three concept directions. Chapter 8 documents the Harris profile evaluation through which a final concept direction was selected. Chapter 9 describes the prototyping process, the user testing setup and findings, and the final iteration before handover.

Part D — Deliver closes the academic argument and provides the practical handover materials. Chapter 10 presents the final design in full and documents the handover materials prepared for Essense and Eidra. Chapter 11 answers the research questions, verifies the design requirements, and outlines the governance conditions and sustainability recommendations for the system's transition to operational deployment. Chapter 12 discusses the theoretical contribution, limitations, and future research directions. Chapter 13 closes with a personal reflection on the practice of strategic design and the researcher's own development across the project.

Navigating this thesis: A reader interested primarily in the design outcomes should focus on Chapters 6, 8, 9, and 10. A reader interested primarily in the behavioural research and diagnosis should focus on Chapters 4, 5, and 6. A reader assessing methodological rigour should read Chapter 3 alongside the relevant analytical sections — Sections 5.2, 5.3, and 7.3 in particular.

Conventions used throughout this thesis: Throughout all sections, direct alignments with the COM-B model and the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) are indicated in square brackets at the end of relevant sentences — for example, [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context] or [Psychological Capability – Knowledge]. These brackets maintain methodological transparency and link empirical findings and design decisions back to the theoretical foundation established in Chapter 4. Appendices are referenced throughout the text as Appendix X. A full appendix index is provided at the opening of the appendix section, listing all materials included and their corresponding sections.

Behavioural Scaffolding — the deliberate use of temporary external systems, supports, and routines to help an individual complete a task, regulate behaviour, or build a new skill until it can be performed independently.

Blank Page Problem — a term coined in this thesis to describe the experience of choice paralysis that occurs before personal development begins; employees know they should develop but do not know where or how to start, creating a cognitive barrier at the point of initiation.

COM-B — Capability, Opportunity, Motivation — Behaviour. A behavioural science framework describing the three conditions that must be sufficiently present for a behaviour to occur (West & Michie, 2020). Used throughout this thesis as the primary diagnostic lens for analysing personal development behaviour at Essense.

Double Diamond — a design process framework developed by the Design Council (2005) structured into four phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. Used as the overarching methodological framework for this project.

Eidra — the consultancy collective of which Essense is a member. Eidra sets overarching guidelines and requirements within which all partner organisations — including Essense — must operate.

Essense — the creative agency in which this project is situated; a human-centric design consultancy of approximately 50 employees, operating within the Eidra collective.

iFrame — a window within a webpage. In this report, it refers to the interactive system pages being displayed inside a container within Notion, running from the Vercel deployment rather than from Notion itself.

Invisible Agent — the informal name used in this thesis for the final system: an AI-mediated personal development environment operating across Notion, Google Calendar, and Claude AI.

Namespacing — a data labelling method that keeps each user's stored information separated and inaccessible to others, ensuring that data belongs to and can only be accessed by its owner.

OAuth — a permission system that allows one application to access data from another on the user's behalf. In this report, it refers to the system requesting permission to interact with Google Calendar via a one-time user approval.

PD — Personal Development; the active, ongoing process of building skills, expanding capabilities, and reflecting on growth within a professional context.

Reinforcement Void — a term coined in this thesis to describe the absence of formal reward mechanisms or career consequences connected to personal development at Essense; growth is only recognised when it translates directly into billable client value.

Sacred Time Blocks — the automated calendar reservations created by the system's Calendar Sanctity feature; recurring time slots blocked in the employee's Google Calendar specifically for personal development activity.

Seniority Capital — a term coined in this thesis to describe the tacit knowledge that senior employees have developed for structuring their own personal development — self-created tracking systems, reflective habits, and the ability to identify meaningful next steps — which junior employees do not yet possess.

Single Source of Truth (SSOT) — the Notion-based central hub of the final system; the single environment in which all personal development activity is initiated, tracked, reflected upon, and reviewed.

SMART — Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. A goal-setting framework used within Eidra's career development structure and embedded into the goal deconstruction feature of the final system.

Sugarcoated Feedback Loop — a term coined in this thesis to describe the cultural dynamic at Essense in which the predominance of positive feedback prevents employees from receiving the constructive critique needed to identify genuine development directions..

System 1 / System 2 — the two cognitive processing modes described by Dual Process Theory (Kahneman, 2011; Sloman, 1996). System 1 is automatic, fast, and habit-based; System 2 is deliberate, effortful, and slow. Personal development tasks — reflection, goal-setting, planning — are System 2 activities; the final system is designed to reduce their cognitive cost so that they can increasingly be performed through System 1 interactions.

TDF — Theoretical Domains Framework. A validated behavioural science framework comprising 14 domains that specify the determinants of behaviour (Cane et al., 2012). Used throughout this thesis as the granular diagnostic lens beneath the COM-B model, identifying precisely which behavioural domains require intervention.

Temporal Gap — a term coined in this thesis to describe the period between formal check-in moments — mid-year and year-end reviews — during which personal development is entirely deprioritised and crowded out by client work in the absence of a continuous structural support.

To-Do Fatigue — a term coined in this thesis to describe the experience of personal development as an additive administrative burden rather than an opportunity; when PD is treated as another item on an already overloaded task list, cognitive fatigue causes it to be systematically deprioritised.

YER — Year-End Review; the formal annual evaluation moment within Essense at which personal development goals are set, reviewed, and assessed. Currently one of only two structured touchpoints for PD in the year, the other being the mid-year review.

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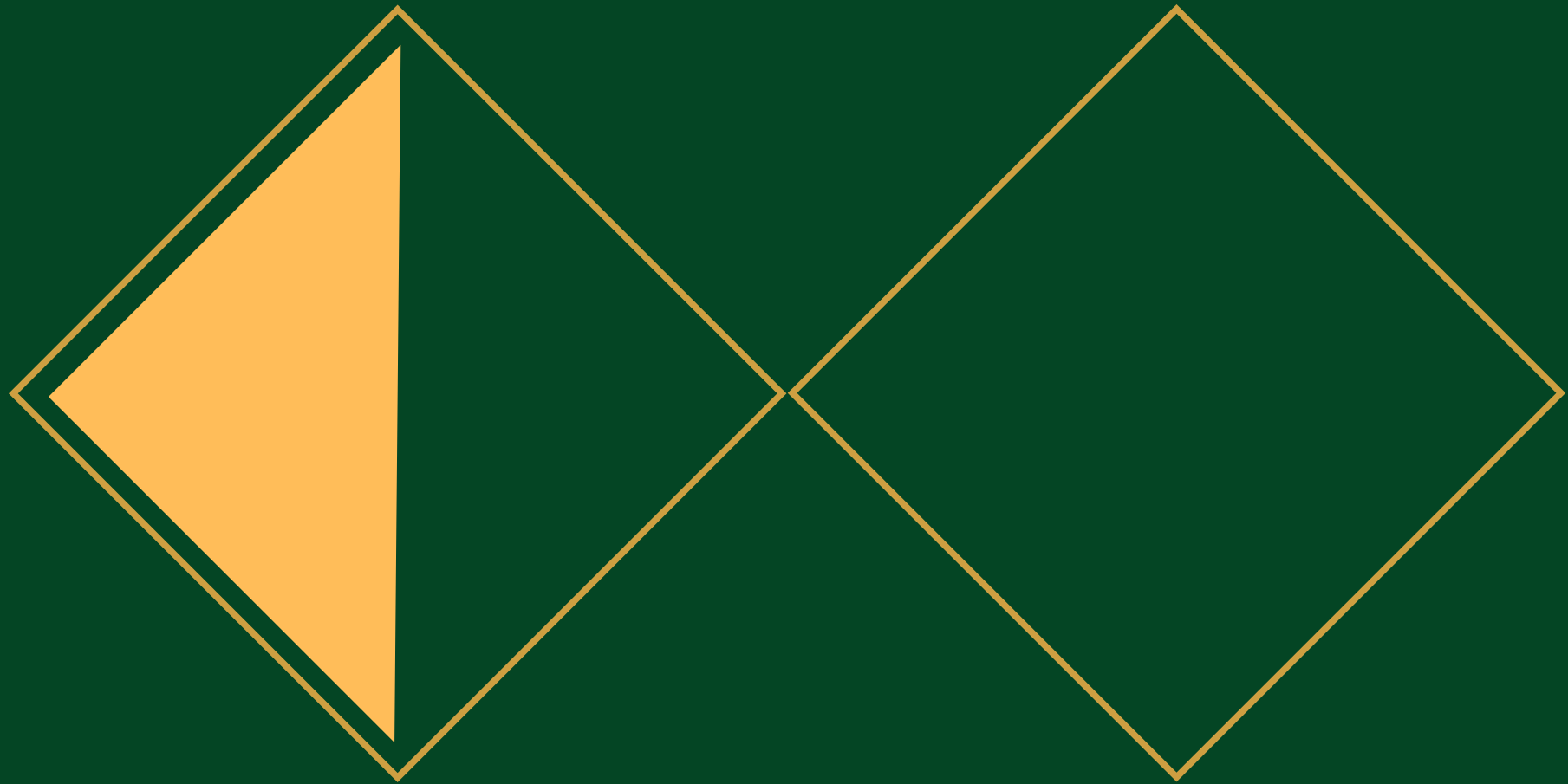
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A Discover

Divergent phase - chapter 1-3

In this phase:

- Introduction and context
- Problem orientation
- Methodology



PHASE INTRODUCTION

The Discover phase establishes the contextual and empirical foundation from which the entire project is built. Its purpose is not yet to solve — it is to understand: the organisational reality of Essense and Eidra, the nature of the problem that personal development currently poses for employees, and the methodological apparatus through which that problem will be rigorously investigated.

Three chapters constitute this phase. Chapter 1 establishes why personal development matters — both strategically, within the context of HRM and organisational performance, and specifically, within the context of Essense as a creative agency operating within the Eidra collective. Chapter 2 orients the problem space: drawing on the internal survey and project initiation insights, it identifies the existing friction and defines the core challenge that the project sets out to resolve. Chapter 3 establishes the methodological framework — the research questions, the Double Diamond structure, and the custom-designed protocol for each research method used throughout the project.

The output of the Discover phase is a grounded, scoped problem definition and a methodological plan: the foundation from which the Define phase can begin collecting and analysing evidence.

Introduction & Context

1.1 Why personal development

1.2 Organisational structure and culture

01

This chapter establishes the organisational and contextual foundation of this project. To understand the design challenge that follows, it is first necessary to understand why personal development is strategically relevant in the current landscape, and second, to understand the specific organisational context in which this project operates. Section 1.1 establishes the case for personal development from both an organisational and individual perspective. Section 1.2 describes the structure and culture of Essense and Eidra, introducing the dual-context in which the developed system must operate.

1.1 Why personal development

The company Essense is situated in a creative and fast-changing environment, especially with the rise of AI that influences this greatly (Future 100, 2025). Research indicates that skill gaps will become a problem, especially in the creative sector (Božić, 2024). The potential of the industry lies in growth and innovation; for a company to thrive, it needs to establish constant growth and innovation, keep developing, and be able to adjust quickly if needed. To achieve this, the practice of active personal development (PD) is essential.

From an organisational perspective, PD opportunities develop human capital resources within a company, enabling a sustained competitive advantage (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Investing in the continuous growth of employees grants the company a unique asset that is hard to duplicate. Beyond competitive advantage, providing PD opportunities is positively associated with job engagement across professional contexts (Fletcher, 2019), because employees find greater personal meaning in their roles when they are given room to grow (Fletcher, 2019). While Bakker and Bal (2010) demonstrate this relationship empirically, Fletcher (2019) establishes that this mechanism operates broadly across HRM contexts — the link between development and engagement is not context-bound but a consistent feature of how individuals relate to their work. PD facilitates the fulfilment of self-actualisation needs, as stated by Maslow (1943), resulting in stronger emotional bonds with the organisation and improved psychological well-being (Basher et al., 2025). Furthermore, ensuring these needs are fulfilled makes employees feel valued, leading to long-term commitment and making PD a crucial driver for employee retention (Basher et al., 2025).

At the individual level, the foundation of personal development lies in the growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). A growth mindset not only enhances resilience and adaptive cognitive skills (Meylani, 2024), but is also directly associated with greater happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being — employees do not merely stay, they thrive (Blackwell et al., 2007; Meylani, 2024). In a sector increasingly influenced by AI and automation, continuous PD is therefore essential for maintaining both individual productivity and well-being across the lifespan (Lund et al., 2021). Retention, job engagement, quality of work, competitive advantage, and company growth are established as the main incentives for stakeholders — and as underscored in the literature, personal development is an effective means of addressing all of these simultaneously.

1.2 Organisational structure and culture

Essense is a part of the consultancy collective Eidra; both have their own cultures and structures. The system that is developed should be able to operate in both.

Essense is a creative agency specialised in human-centric design with approximately 50 employees. The company has decentralised authority, a low hierarchy, changing teams with high autonomy and speed, and decision-making that stays within the project team. Hence, the organisational structure leans towards a modern flat structure (Calabretta et al., 2025).

The core values they uphold are open, driven, and collaborative. This reflects a culture that is open and positive, with a focus on collaboration (Essense, 2026). An open culture and positive environment relate to psychological safety, which is the primary driver for learning behaviour that enables growth (Edmondson, 1999).

Eidra has a diverse group of 150 active partners. They state that they have designed a model for orchestrating common capabilities and cultures of the partners (Eidra, 2026). This refers to a modern network structure (Calabretta, 2025). The autonomous structure offers freedom and flexibility and builds upon different areas of expertise across cultures. However, the different sources of guidance and systems can also create a lack of clarity and an overload of information for employees. It can be unclear which structure and system are leading.

Essense has only recently joined the Eidra collective, which causes uncertainty regarding systems and communication. Tension can be found between this large, more robust consultancy collective and the small, flexible company. In many aspects, such as personal development, it is key to define a way for these contrasting structures to work together.

Problem orientation

- 2.1 Problem statement: current situation
- 2.2 Preliminary orientation: barriers and enablers
- 2.3 Stakeholder analysis
- 2.4 Project scope and constraints
- 2.5 Main problem to be solved

02

This chapter establishes the problem space that this project sets out to address. Starting from the identified dissatisfaction within Essense, Section 2.1 describes the current situation and the immediate drivers of the project. Section 2.2 provides a preliminary orientation of the barriers and enablers surrounding personal development, based on initial survey data and the project initiation. Section 2.3 maps the relevant stakeholders, followed by the project's scope and constraints in Section 2.4. The chapter closes in Section 2.5 with a synthesis of the above into a clearly defined core problem and project objective.

2.1 Problem statement: current situation

A yearly survey was conducted within Essense; the results showed dissatisfaction concerning personal development (Essense,2025). The company desires high satisfaction rates among employees to ensure high-quality work and high retention rates. The friction found in the survey appeared to come from a lack of structured, accessible training, clear career paths, and the missing reinstatement or clarification of personal development programs. However, the survey's main aim was an analysis of general employee engagement across a range of topics; hence, the topic of personal development and the cause of friction here were not explored in depth.

Essense has had a personal development playbook, but it is now obsolete and no longer in use. The discontinuation of the playbook is itself a signal. Its abandonment reflects not a lack of ambition, but the opposite: the existing system no longer met the standards Essense holds itself to. Essense operates within a high-performance, quality-driven culture — the core values of being open, driven, and collaborative are not aspirational but operational. A personal development system that falls short of these standards is not merely inconvenient; it is misaligned with the company's identity. In this sense, the identified dissatisfaction is better understood as an identified opportunity for improvement: a gap between the current experience around personal development and the desired results Essense aims to achieve. The objective of this project is therefore not simply to resolve friction, but to deliver a system that meets the company's ambition — one that allows Essense to uphold its own high standards for employee growth and organisational performance.

Furthermore, there are scattered rules and systems. There is no central place or system that covers the topic of personal development. Time allocation for personal development is set to 4% of working hours. Additionally, a training budget is available to employees for designated learning activities; however, access to and usage of this budget require prior approval before they can be utilized. The structural consequence of this absence is visible in the current temporal pattern of personal development at Essense: formal growth conversations occur twice yearly, leaving a gap of approximately six months between check-in moments in which no structured developmental touchpoints exist (Figure 1).

In addition, Essense has now joined Eidra, causing needed restructuring and new possibilities. Eidra has guidelines and restrictions regarding personal development that are not currently embedded in the personal development system.

Essense desires a deliverable for personal development that resolves the existing dissatisfaction. The objective of this project is to determine the root cause of the existing ambiguity; accordingly, a new system for personal development is to be developed that resolves this. Essense has established that personal development coaching to support the system will be integrated. Moreover, it should respect the 4% time allocation designated for personal development, remaining sustainable within that intended scale rather than depending on time the current structure does not protect.

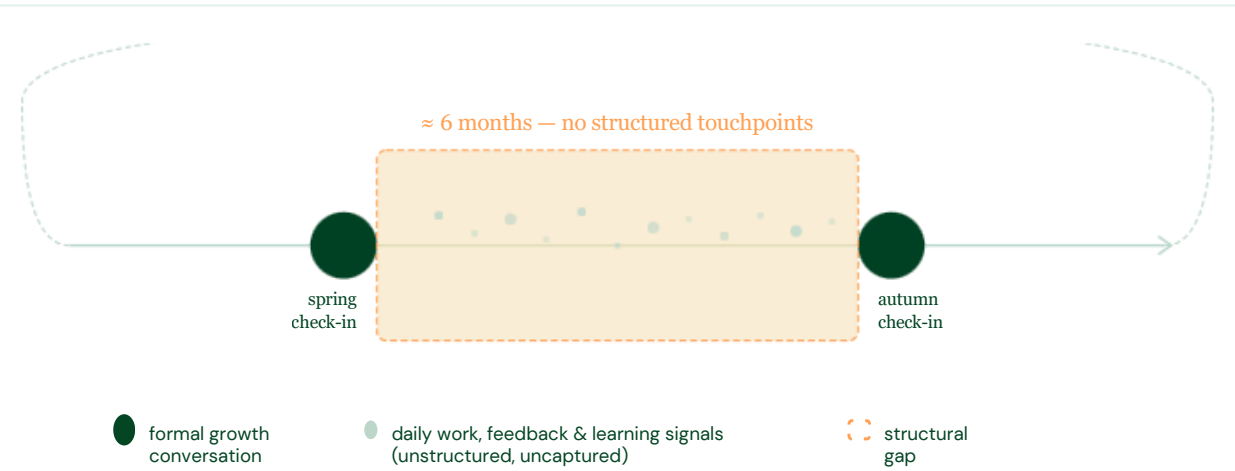


Figure 1 — The structural gap in Essense's current personal development cycle. Formal growth conversations occur twice yearly; the six months between them contain no structured developmental touchpoints. Daily work, feedback moments, and learning signals accumulate within this gap but are not captured — leaving the next growth conversation reliant on memory rather than evidence.

2.2

Preliminary orientation:
barriers and enablers

Before the field research was conducted, a preliminary orientation of the factors that could stimulate or discourage active personal development was established. This orientation is based on the results of the internal survey and insights gathered during the project initiation with Essense — not on the outcomes of the research phase, which will be addressed in Chapter 5. This preliminary framing serves to provide a structured starting point and initial direction for the research, rather than presenting validated findings. Research shows that behaviour change interventions based on theory have a higher success rate (Cane, 2012). Hence, a theory needs to be selected to function as a foundation for structuring these barriers and enablers; the reasoning for choosing this specific framework can be found in Section 3.3.1.

Based on the survey outcomes and the project initiation, a number of preliminary barriers were identified. Personal development is currently hindered by limited designated time and a busy work schedule. There are limited opportunities within personal development and no set system in place. Most importantly, the transfer to Eidra requires a significant amount of restructuring and adjustment, causing a lack of clarity and uncertainty for Essense employees.

Within the current situation, a few factors also stimulate personal development. The company has a creative background, which is beneficial: people who identify as creatives and have experience in a creative work environment tend to hold a significantly higher growth mindset (Karwowski, 2017), which offers a supportive environment for PD initiatives. Besides, the company has a large amount of human capital and can leverage the expertise within the team to their advantage. Lastly, the recent integration of Essense into the Eidra umbrella offers a strategic opening to implement a new and well-founded personal development initiative.

2.3

Stakeholder analysis

Primary stakeholders are Essense team members with the incentive of professional growth, job retention, and job satisfaction. As mentioned earlier, a coaching system is integrated into the system. Therefore, coaches will be primary stakeholders, as they will be the ones facilitating the new system. Next to this, Essense management must balance the team's needs and Eidra's corporate requirements.

Eidra requires alignment with central guidelines, aiming for alignment with other companies under their umbrella and ensuring a high quality of work.

Finally, the clients of Essense are indirect stakeholders who benefit from the high quality of work, as well as the innovative and creative outcomes from a unified workforce.

2.4

Project scope and constraints

The project and the development of the personal development system have non-negotiable constraints that influence both the research phase and the final deliverable. The project is bound to a timeframe of 100 days; this entails both the research and development phases. This requires an iterative design process that ensures the high quality of the end deliverable.

Furthermore, the system should be aligned with the Eidra and Essense guidelines to ensure that the local solution remains compatible within the broader ecosystem. For designated personal development activities, an allocation of 4% of working hours exists. The developed system should remain sustainable within this intended allocation rather than depend on time that is, in practice, designated but not structurally protected.

2.5

Main problem to be solved

PROBLEM AS DEFINED AT THE START OF THE PROJECT

Synthesizing the organizational context, constraints, and identified possibilities, the core challenge here is not merely a lack of offered tools, but rather a missing cohesive organizational architecture for personal development. Due to the integration into Eidra, systemic complexity has been added to the agile and flat company. Currently, there is no system in place that effectively bridges Essense's culture with the guidelines from the Eidra umbrella.

Hence, the core challenge of this project can be defined as follows: Essense currently lacks a structured personal development framework that integrates and balances employees' personal development needs with the structures, culture, and guidelines from both Essense and Eidra.

The friction found here is emphasized by the systemic ambiguity of integrating into the Eidra construct and the set time allocation of 4%. The missing structure and guidance in personal development is holding employees back from reaching their potential. The objective of this project is therefore to resolve this ambiguity by developing a validated personal development system that is continuous, structured, and aligned with both Essense's culture and Eidra's guidelines — one that concretely improves employee satisfaction regarding personal development and bridges the gap between existing tools and the daily reality of working within a fast-paced creative agency.

Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

3.2 Methodological Framework: The Double Diamond

3.3 Research Strategy

3.4 Research Approach per Method

03

This chapter establishes the methodological foundation of this project. To ensure the validity and rigour of the research conducted, each methodological choice is justified before it is described. Section 3.1 presents the research questions that guide the project. Section 3.2 introduces the Double Diamond as the overarching methodological framework. Section 3.3 outlines the research strategy and the deliberate reasoning behind the selection of analytical frameworks. Section 3.4 details the specific protocol followed for each research method. Together, these sections ensure that the research is not merely documented but fully reproducible — any reader should be able to follow the exact logic and arrive at the same conclusions.

3.1 Research Questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS : PROJECT BASE

At the core of this project lies the resolution of the structural ambiguity surrounding personal development. This project objective is captured by the following research question:

Main question: How can a structured personal development deliverable be designed that balances the needs and wants of Essense employees with the guidelines of Eidra?

To answer this main question, the following sub-questions have been established:

- 1. What are the professional growth desires of Essense employees and requirements from Essense and Eidra in PD that need to be met?**
- 2. What are the current drivers and barriers for Essense employees to actively work on PD?**
- 3. What format of PD deliverable best ensures long-term engagement and adaptivity within Essense's fast-paced, evolving creative environment?**

By systematically answering these sub-questions, the foundation for the design can be found, and with this, the main question can be answered.

3.2 Methodological Framework: The Double Diamond

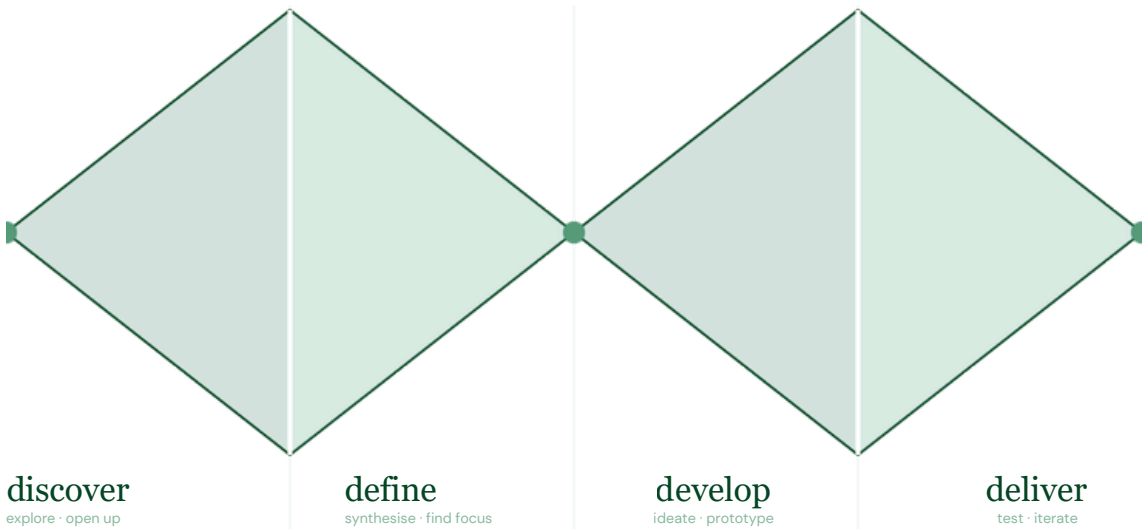
The Double Diamond (Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver) is used as the methodological framework for this project. This is applicable as it is most suited for complex problems with an unclear solution (Design Council, 2005). Furthermore, the process of converging and diverging in the model enables the gathering of all relevant information and guides the project toward a clear direction. It provides guidance in translating the complexity of the project into a concrete and testable deliverable.

The framework is structured into two diamonds:

The first diamond (Discover and Define): Focuses on exploring the problem space by gathering insights from a literature review, provided company documents, and field research. These will be synthesized into clear conclusions that will function as a starting point and direction for the ideating phase. This "point of synthesis" is essential, as the emphasis will lie on development rather than research from that point forward.

The second diamond (Develop and Deliver): Focuses on the solution space, developing and validating concepts and eventually refining these into a final personal development deliverable.

The project process is iterative and non-linear and uses design thinking throughout every stage; the method specifically lends itself to doing so.



The left diamond (chs 4–6) frames the problem space: opening wide through desk research and interviews, converging on design requirements.
The right diamond (chs 7–9) frames the solution space: opening through co-creation, converging through prototype evaluation.

Figure 2: Double diamond as a methodological framework plus the methods used within this: Discover → Define → Develop → Deliver · Design Council (2005), adapted for this project

3.3 Research Strategy

To grasp the complexity of the project and ensure the validity of results, data triangulation is used. This means the usage of multiple specially designed approaches for approaching the research problem. This chosen strategy utilizes a multi-methodological approach to create a holistic perspective on the research problem based on diverse sources. The research strategy spans the full Double Diamond, with distinct methods assigned to each phase: the literature review, document analysis, and interviews constitute the Discover and Define phases of the first diamond; the co-creation session, prototyping, and user testing and validation constitute the Develop and Deliver phases of the second.

By synthesizing the data from these three distinct angles, the "blind spots" accompanying the usage of one singular method are overcome. As a foundation for each method, a main goal was set beforehand to ensure all needed information was covered.

- Literature review (Theoretical construct): Setting a structured and well-defined base for the field research, hence making sure that the research is aimed and grounded. This involves understanding the theory of personal development before gathering data.
- Document analysis (Organizational perspective): Establishing the hard constraints and guidelines within the Essense and Eidra ecosystem and getting a holistic understanding of structure and culture.
- Interviews (Practical understanding): Getting a deep understanding of the experience with personal development, as well as the barriers and desires accompanying this.

The combination of these ensures a broad and realistic understanding of the subject and a pointed approach. The methods used can be mapped against the research questions.

Research Method	Source	Linked Research Question
Literature Review	Academic Publications	Q1,Q2
Document Analysis	Eidra & Essense Internal documents, surveys & public information	Q1
Qualitative Interviews	Essense Employees	Q1,Q2
Co-creation	Essense Employees	Q3
User tests/validation	Essense Employees	Q3

Table 1: Methods mapped to used sources and research question aimed to answer

3.3.1 Selection of Analytical Frameworks

To ensure that the research was driven by strategic intentionality rather than a fragmented accumulation of findings, specific analytical lenses were selected during the initial literature discovery phase. The primary objective was to adopt established frameworks capable of organising the complex behavioural and psychological constructs underlying personal development within the organisational context of Essense. This structured approach ensured that the field research captured a holistic perspective of PD, preventing significant behavioural determinants from being overlooked and ensuring that no aspect of the behaviour could be missed.

The selection criteria applied were threefold. First, the framework needed to be capable of explaining the behaviour in its entirety — not just isolating a single determinant, but accounting for all possible influences simultaneously. Second, it needed to be empirically validated and grounded in behavioural science, ensuring that the research was anchored in evidence rather than researcher intuition. Third, the framework needed to be directly translatable into design intervention logic — that is, it needed to not only diagnose what was happening, but point toward what needed to change and how.

The combination of the COM-B model and the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) was selected on the basis of all three criteria. Together, they constitute a rigorous and complementary diagnostic system. COM-B provides the 'helicopter view' — a high-level structural map of whether the problem is rooted in Capability, Opportunity, or Motivation (West & Michie, 2020). The TDF then operates as the more granular lens beneath it, specifying precisely which of its 14 behavioural domains are implicated and where the gap between intent and behaviour occurs (Cane et al., 2012). Critically, the two frameworks can be directly mapped onto one another (Cane et al., 2012), which means that findings at the COM-B level immediately point toward the specific TDF domains requiring intervention — and from those domains, toward concrete design responses. This layered structure ensures that the research findings are not just descriptive but directly actionable.

Dual Process Theory was applied as a third and complementary lens, operating independently of the COM-B/TDF structure. Where COM-B and TDF explain what is influencing behaviour and where the problem lies, Dual Process Theory addresses how information is cognitively processed during personal development tasks (Sloman, 1996). By identifying whether behaviour relies on automatic, habitual System 1 processing or deliberate, effortful System 2 processing, this theory makes visible the cognitive demands placed on employees by the current system — a dimension that neither COM-B nor TDF captures directly. Understanding this distinction is essential for designing an intervention that does not simply identify what needs to change, but accounts for the cognitive effort required to sustain that change in a high-workload environment.

By anchoring the study in this combination of frameworks, the research strategy remains targeted, theoretically grounded, and methodologically sound. It ensures that the design requirements presented in Chapter 6 are not the product of intuition or data accumulation alone, but of a comprehensive and structured understanding of the behavioural reality of personal development at Essense.

3 . 4 Research approach per method

The approaches used for this project are adjusted and designed to fit the project goal. These "custom-made" approaches ensure that the data collection remains viable within the set time span of 100 days. By using a structured approach set beforehand, biases will be minimized, ensuring objective interpretation. For the co-creation and user tests, the participants were asked to sign the consent form prior to the session beginning to ensure they understood how the data was stored and utilized.

3 . 4 . 1 Literature review protocol

The protocol for the literature review follows a six-step approach :

1. Defining scope and search directions— the research questions were translated into explicit topic-level questions, establishing which thematic areas required investigation and which fell outside the scope of this project.
2. Defining search terms— search terms were derived from the three thematic clusters that emerged from the scope definition, with a neutrality check embedded to ensure counter-perspectives were explicitly included and confirmatory bias was prevented.
3. Searching and Iterating on search terms — searches were conducted in Google Scholar with a defined saturation point per term: searching stopped at two pages of results where no new relevant material appeared, at which point the term was adjusted or closed.
4. Adding in search terms when needed— any new topic emerging during reading was evaluated against the research questions before being added to the scope, keeping the review targeted rather than accumulative.
5. Quality appraisal — sources were included when published in a peer-reviewed journal or book and directly relevant to the research questions; a minimum of two independent sources per claim was required, though in practice most claims are supported by more.
6. Thematic synthesis— retained sources were organised into the top-down structure reflected in Chapter 4, ensuring the sequence of topics followed the logic of the argument rather than the order of discovery.

The thematic synthesis in step 6 produces the structured theoretical foundation presented in Chapter 4, which sets the grounded base from which all field research is approached and ensures the analytical frameworks are selected with clear rationale before data collection begins. The output of this process consists of the theoretical foundations for the project and a comprehensive understanding of the related context and concepts.

3 . 4 . 2 Document Analysis

A six-step document analysis was conducted on internal Essense and Eidra documents, surveys, and public company information:

1. Define needed elements of the company analysis— the required organisational dimensions were defined beforehand based on the research questions, ensuring the review was purposive rather than exhaustive.
2. Map available sources— all available internal and public documents were inventoried against the predefined elements, establishing what was accessible and where gaps existed before analysis began.
3. Analyze found documents— each document was reviewed against the predefined elements, with relevant data points extracted to enable systematic cross-document comparison.
4. Order data and define missing information— extracted data was organised by theme and insufficient coverage was explicitly flagged before synthesis was attempted.
5. Fill missing data gaps— where gaps were identified, targeted follow-up through additional documents or publicly available sources was conducted to ensure a complete evidence base.
6. Synthesize data into requirements— findings were translated into organisational requirements, each traceable to a specific source, ensuring the output is grounded rather than interpretive.

The synthesis in step 6 produces the set of organisational hard requirements presented in Section 5.1, establishing the non-negotiable boundaries —the Eidra Foundation pillars, and the system synergy constraint — within which the design must operate.

The output of these steps will be the set requirements from an organizational perspective

3 . 4 . 3 Interview analysis

The interview analysis is based on the theories found in literature (COM-B,TDF, dual processing) and is structured to align with them. The analysis was conducted following a nine-step approach:

1. Transcription & Anonymization— all eight interviews were fully transcribed and anonymised before any analytical work began, ensuring the coding process operated on complete data.
2. Familiarization with data— all transcripts were read in full before coding, allowing patterns to emerge from the data.
3. Manual coding – codes were generated directly from the data rather than from theory, preventing premature theoretical closure.
4. Matrix Charting (The Working Matrix)— generated codes were mapped across all eight participants, enabling systematic cross-participant comparison before synthesis.
5. Thematic Synthesis (The Analysis Matrix) — recurring patterns were consolidated into higher-order themes, producing a structured overview of shared barriers, enablers, and desires.
6. Linking found synthesized data to theory— only at this stage were themes connected to COM-B, TDF, and Dual Process Theory, ensuring the frameworks organised the findings rather than predetermined them.
7. AI analysis with ATLAS.ti— ATLAS.ti was used as an independent verification step; however, the AI-generated output did not yield findings that added analytical value beyond the manual coding and was insufficiently specific to the research context to be meaningfully integrated. The findings in Chapter 5 therefore rest exclusively on the manual process in steps 1–6.
8. Comparing findings— the manual synthesis and the ATLAS.ti pattern check were compared; where consistent, findings were treated as robustly supported; where discrepancies arose, the raw transcripts were re-examined to determine the better-grounded reading.
9. Synthesizing and defining key findings— verified findings were structured by COM-B component and TDF domain, forming the evidence base from which the diagnostic conclusion in Section 5.2 is drawn.

The output is a synthesized root cause for the discrepancy between dissatisfaction and desired growth, connected to the theory found in the literature.

3.4.3 Co - creation protocol

The co-creation session with employees is used to provide direction in the ideation process. Through the involvement of employees, they feel a connection to the deliverable created, and insight is obtained into the desired direction of the deliverable.

The co-creation protocol followed a 10-step approach:

As for the co-creation session;

- 1. Introduction— participants were briefed on the session structure and purpose, ensuring all participants could engage from an equal starting point.
- 2. Brainwriting with 5 HMW's — responses were written individually and silently before sharing, preventing dominant voices from shaping others' contributions at the generative stage.
- 3. Clustering — generated responses were grouped thematically to surface the underlying directions present across the collective output.
- 4. Dot voting— participants voted independently to surface group preference without open discussion influencing individual judgment.
- 5. Discussion— a facilitated closing conversation captured the reasoning behind voting patterns and nuance the votes alone could not convey.

After the session:

The post-session synthesis transforms the raw output of the co-creation into a validated and structured set of ideas directly informing the ideation phase in Chapter 7. Rather than presenting the generated ideas as-is, this stage applies a rigorous analytical process — including re-clustering, AI-assisted synthesis, and a member-check validation with participants — to ensure that the findings accurately reflect participant intent and are viable within the organisational context.

- 1. Data analysis (transcript) & define key takeaways — the session recording was reviewed in full to extract directions and reasoning beyond what the voting outcomes alone captured.
- 2. Re-clustering and theme/pillar finding— ideas were re-clustered independently of the in-session groupings, allowing the structure to reflect the data rather than the grouping logic applied under time pressure.
- 3. Ai assisted idea generation — AI-assisted synthesis was used to manage the volume of raw output; each result was reviewed and corrected against the original transcript, with AI limited to accelerating non-decision tasks.
- 4. Feedback moments & finding gaps— emerging directions were assessed against the design requirements to identify where the co-creation output required supplementation before ideation.
- 5. Validation of ideas with co-creation participants & scope alignment screening — synthesised directions were returned to participants for a member-check, confirming that the interpretation accurately reflected their contributions.

The output is synthesized ideas and directions for ideation. Furthermore, using the evaluation of ideas the direction is validated and a feedback loop is created, making sure that no disruptancy between meant input and interpretation exists.

3.4.4 User Testing and Validation Protocol I

The user tests with employees are used to validate whether the developed prototype resolves the five design requirements established in Chapter 6, and to generate experience-based input for the final iteration before handover.

The user testing protocol followed a structured approach:

- 1. Introduction— participants were briefed on the think-aloud method and informed that the prototype, not the participant, was being tested, reducing performance anxiety and encouraging honest responses.
- 2. Think-aloud task execution— participants completed predefined tasks while verbalising their thoughts, providing real-time insight into where the system's logic matched or diverged from user expectations.
- 3. Mid-task Likert scoring— structured scores after each task enabled cross-participant comparison and direct mapping to the five design requirements.
- 4. Post-session interview— qualitative reasoning behind scores was gathered to surface observations the think-aloud had not captured in sufficient depth.
- 5. Transcription & analysis— observations were coded against the five design requirements, keeping the analysis anchored to the evaluative criteria established before testing began.

Synthesis of the session— findings were synthesised into a cross-participant pattern overview, distinguishing between shared friction points signalling a design issue and individual observations reflecting personal preference.

The synthesis in step 7 translates observations and scores gathered across participants into the prioritised iteration points described in Section 9.5, ensuring that the final design adjustments made before handover are driven by empirical evidence and traceable back to the specific requirements they address.

The output of these steps consists of concrete, requirement-linked validation evidence and a prioritised set of iteration points, which function as direct input for the final design iteration described in Section 9.5.

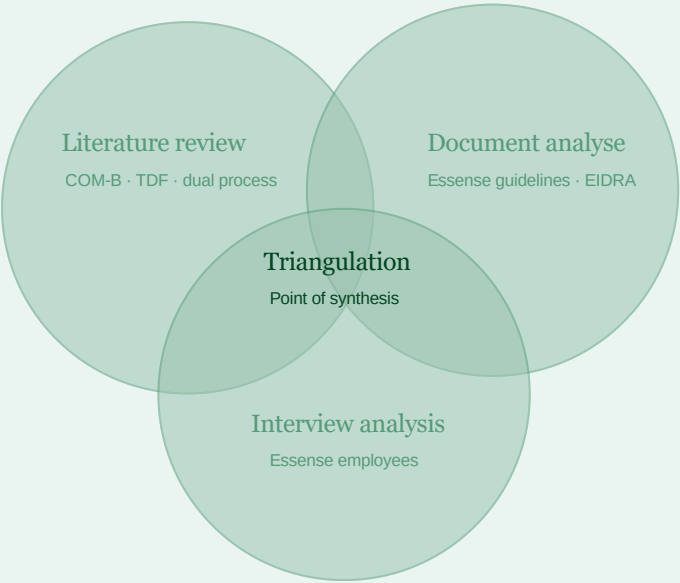


Figure 3: Visualisation of source triangulation

A Discover

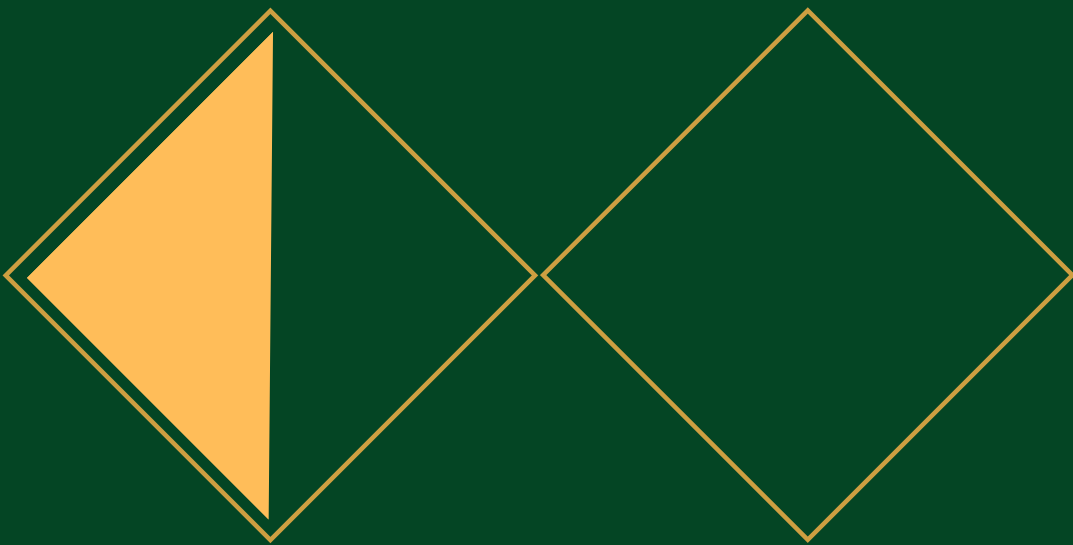
Divergent phase - chapter 1-3

In this phase:

Introduction and context

Problem orientation

Methodology



PHASE SUMMARY

The Discover phase has established three things. First, the strategic and organisational context within which this project operates: personal development at Essense is not a peripheral concern but a core driver of employee retention, engagement, and competitive capacity — and the transition into the Eidra collective has introduced a layer of structural ambiguity that the current system cannot accommodate. Second, the problem definition: the core challenge is not a deficit of tools or intent, but a missing organisational architecture that bridges Essense's culture with Eidra's framework in a way that is sustainable in the operational conditions of agency life. Third, the methodological plan: five research methods — literature review, document analysis, interviews, co-creation, and user testing — each with a custom protocol, deployed in sequence to move from theoretical foundation through empirical diagnosis to validated design.

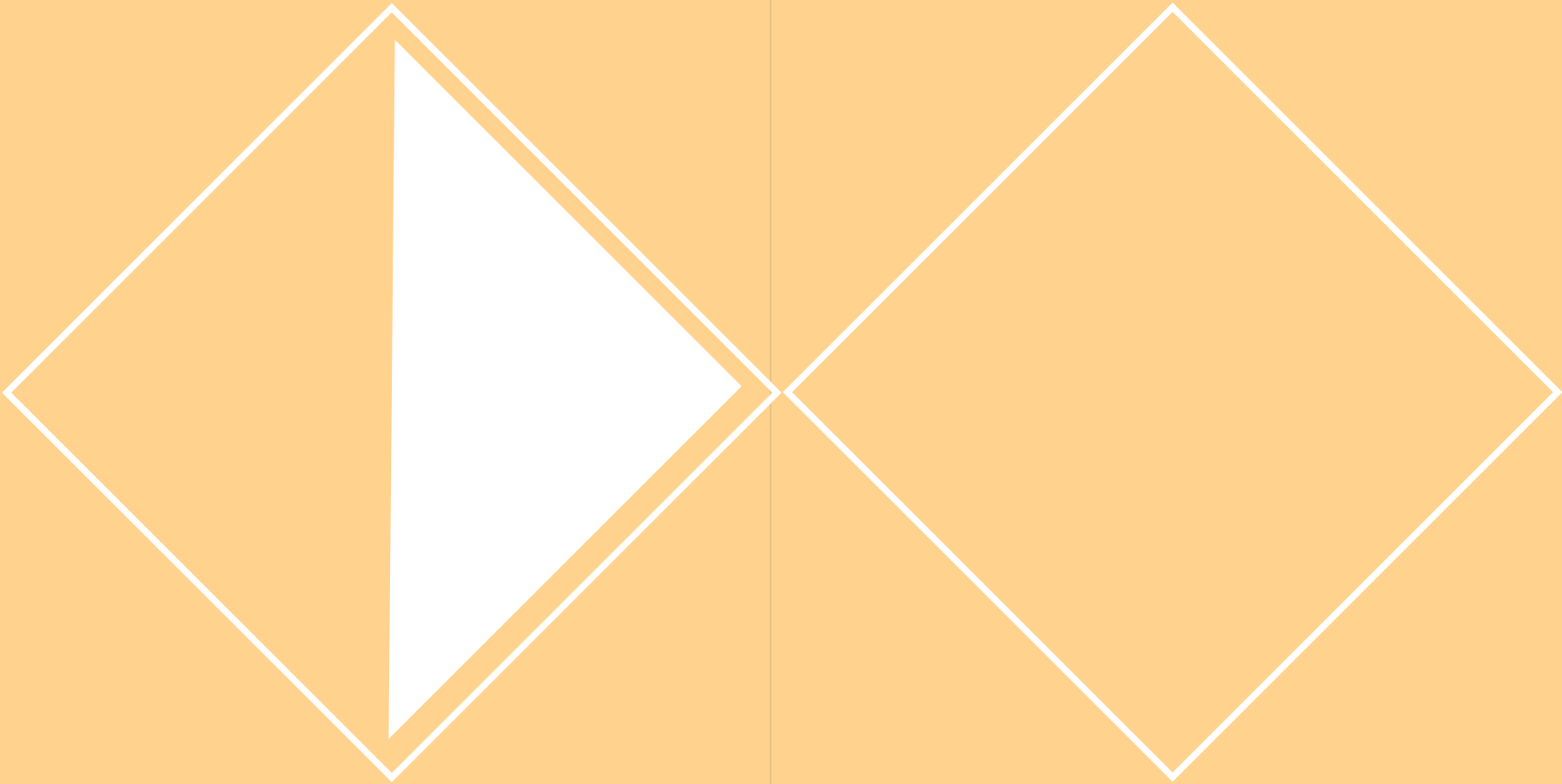
What the Discover phase does not yet contain is evidence. The problem definition established here is grounded in initial survey data and project initiation insights — it is a starting point, not a conclusion. The Define phase that follows supplies that evidence, through a literature review and a structured field research programme, and translates it into the analytical foundation from which a design direction can be drawn.

B Define

Divergent phase - chapter 1-3

In this phase

- Literature review
- Interview analysis
- Document analysis
- Found requirements



PHASE INTRODUCTION

Where the Discover phase established the problem space and the methodological plan, the Define phase fills that plan with evidence. Its purpose is to move from initial problem orientation to a rigorously grounded diagnosis: to understand not just that personal development is lacking at Essense, but precisely why — which behavioural mechanisms are implicated, which organisational constraints apply, and what employees themselves desire from a solution.

Three chapters constitute this phase. Chapter 4 provides the theoretical foundation: a systematic literature review covering strategic HRM, the psychological basis of personal development, and the behavioural science frameworks — COM-B, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory — that will function as the diagnostic lenses throughout the remainder of the project. Chapter 5 applies those lenses to the empirical data: the results of the document analysis and eight semi-structured interviews, synthesised into a structured behavioural diagnosis. Chapter 6 translates that diagnosis into the five design requirements and the definitive design challenge that close the first diamond and open the second.

The output of the Define phase is a behavioural diagnosis and a set of five empirically grounded, validated design requirements — the non-negotiable foundation from which every design decision in the Develop phase is drawn.

Literature review:

- 4.1 approach of the review
- 4.2 Strategic HRM and the Importance of Personal Development
- 4.3 Growth mindset in personal development
- 4.4 Reflective Practice as a Foundation for Development
- 4.5 Analytical Lenses: COM-B, TDF, and Dual Process Theory

04

This chapter builds the theoretical foundation that underpins the field research and the diagnostic work that follows. Three bodies of literature are brought together: Strategic Human Resource Management establishes why personal development holds organisational value and what structural conditions support it; research on the growth mindset addresses the individual psychological conditions that make development possible; and behavioural science frameworks — specifically COM-B, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory — provide the analytical lenses through which the barriers and enablers identified in the field research are diagnosed and interpreted. Together, these three levels move from the organisational rationale for personal development, through the individual conditions that enable it, to the mechanisms that explain why it breaks down in practice — directly setting up the analysis in Chapter 5.

4.1 Approach of the review

To answer the research questions, this literature review follows a top-down logic that scales from organisational strategy to individual behaviour. The first stage examines Strategic Human Resource Management (HRM) to establish the value proposition of personal development (PD) within the context of Essense and Eidra. The narrative then transitions to the individual psychological lens — the growth mindset — necessary for understanding the foundational drivers of development. Lastly, behavioural science frameworks (COM-B, TDF, and Dual Process Theory) are explored to establish a diagnostic lens for analysing and structuring user behaviour.

This systematic approach ensures that the investigation encompasses both strategic business objectives and the nuances of human psychology. By integrating these three levels, the review achieves a holistic understanding of the complex elements influencing PD, bridging the gap between theoretical intent and practical application.

The review was conducted following a six-step custom protocol developed for this project, described in full in Section 3.4.1. The process began by defining the scope and search directions from the research questions, with the three thematic clusters — strategic HRM and personal development; growth mindset and psychological foundations of learning; and behavioural science frameworks — selected because each corresponds to a distinct analytical level required to answer the research questions: the organisational rationale for PD (RQ1), the individual psychological conditions underlying it (RQ2), and the behavioural mechanisms through which barriers and enablers can be identified and addressed (RQ2). Topics outside these three levels were assessed against the research questions before inclusion; those that could not be traced back to a specific RQ or gap in the emerging argument were excluded from scope visualising inclusion and exclusion criteria in a mind map with explicit topic-level questions derived from the RQs. Search terms were then derived from these three thematic clusters and ordered by relevance before searching began. A neutrality check was embedded at this stage to ensure that counter-perspectives were explicitly included, preventing confirmatory search bias. A saturation point was defined per search term: searches were stopped at two pages of Google Scholar results where no new relevant material was found, at which point the term was either iterated or closed. Terms were continuously checked against the specific question they were intended to answer, maintaining alignment with the RQs throughout.

As new topics emerged during reading, each was assessed against the set research questions before being added to the search scope — ensuring that the review remained targeted rather than drifting into a narrative review. Found literature was assessed on relevance — rated as high, medium, or low — and stored in a synthesis matrix tracking source, relevance level, topic, RQ relation, and key connection. Sources were included when they were published in a peer-reviewed journal or book and addressed the relevant thematic cluster at a level of specificity sufficient to inform the analytical framework. Searching was stopped per term when a minimum of two independent sources per claim had been identified, reducing the risk of single-source bias; in practice, many claims across the review are supported by more than two sources. The complete set of sources, relevance ratings, and their relation to the research questions is documented in the synthesis matrix in Appendix A. The thematic structure of this chapter — moving from organisational strategy through individual psychology to behavioural diagnostic frameworks — emerged from this synthesis process and reflects a deliberate top-down logic: each level of analysis provides the conceptual foundation for the level that follows.

4.2

Strategic HRM and the importance of Personal Development

This project is situated within strategic human resource management (HRM), specifically focusing on the subject of personal development at Essense, a customer experience agency under the Eidra umbrella.

Providing opportunities for personal development is a crucial practice within an HRM system, because such opportunities develop human capital resources within the organisation, which enable a sustained competitive advantage (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Investing in the continuous growth of employees grants the company a unique asset that is hard to duplicate and, hence, creates a competitive advantage.

Providing PD opportunities is positively associated with job engagement (Bakker & Bal, 2010), partly because employees find greater personal meaning in their roles (Fletcher, 2019). PD facilitates the fulfilment of self-actualisation needs, as stated by Maslow (1943), resulting in stronger emotional bonds with the organisation and improved psychological well-being (Basher et al., 2025). Furthermore, ensuring these needs are fulfilled makes employees feel valued, leading to a long-term commitment to the company and making PD a crucial driver for employee retention (Basher et al., 2025).

In a sector increasingly influenced by AI and automation, continuous PD is essential for maintaining individual productivity and employability across the lifespan (Lund et al., 2021). Retention, job engagement, quality of work, competitive advantage, and company growth are established as the main incentives for stakeholders. As underscored in the literature, personal development is an effective way to address these.

4.3

Growth mindset in personal development

While HRM provides an overview of the business objectives related to personal development, the behavioural determinants of PD — and consequently the effectiveness of the system — can only be fully contextualised by the individual's internal perspective. To understand the substantive meaning of personal development and how this behaviour manifests, the psychological bedrock of development must be understood: the growth mindset.

Multiple definitions can be found for personal development (Irimie, 2012). One of the most cited works on the subject, by Dweck (2006), states that the foundation and meaning of personal development can be found in the growth mindset. Dweck (2006) defines the growth mindset as the belief that an individual's basic qualities can be cultivated through effort and strategy. This mindset is essential for self-improvement and rests on the belief that skills and capabilities are not fixed but can be developed further (Dweck, 2006; Carlson, 2020). A growth mindset fosters resilience, framing setbacks as learning opportunities rather than permanent failures (Dweck, 2006), which in turn enhances emotional regulation and adaptive cognitive skills (Meylani, 2024). Research strongly indicates that a growth mindset facilitates neuroplasticity, allowing the brain to physically reorganise itself through learning and experience (Davidson & Begley, 2012). By leveraging the brain's ability to change, PD interventions help develop adaptive coping skills, leading to higher levels of resilience and psychological well-being (Meylani, 2024).

A growth mindset is also found to have a close relationship with creativity (Karwowski, 2017). Some research argues that there is a spectrum between a growth and a fixed mindset, and that an individual can hold both at once (Carlson, 2020); notably, the ability to hold both mindsets is found more frequently in creatives. Consequently, it is essential to evaluate which mindset is predominantly held by Essense employees during the field research phase. Determining this psychological baseline is critical to ensuring that the system being developed is tailored to the specific needs and existing readiness for development within the organisation.

4.4

Reflective Practice as a Foundation for Development

While the growth mindset establishes the psychological foundation from which development is possible, it does not in itself explain how development actually occurs. The missing mechanism — the process through which experience is converted into growth rather than simply accumulated — is reflection. When considering personal development as a psychological construct, the fundamental mechanism underlying self-development is reflection: the processing of specific experiences that profoundly impact an individual's actions and development trajectory (Meylani, 2024). The two elements of reflection that most directly drive this process are self-control, which involves adhering to self-imposed standards to enable the attainment of desired outcomes, and self-belief, which provides the internal motivation to pursue genuine growth rather than surface-level compliance (Meylani, 2024). Without these two elements, even a strongly held growth mindset remains an orientation rather than a practice.

Reflective practice can be understood as learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice (Finlay, 2008). Importantly, reflection is not simply the act of looking back — it simultaneously involves exploring thoughts and feelings about a situation, looking for insights, and maximising self-awareness (Finlay, 2008). When structured as a continuous cycle, reflective practice enables individuals to recognise the assumptions, patterns of thought, and habitual behaviours that shape their professional trajectory — making visible what is otherwise invisible in the flow of daily work. By actively engaging in reflection, employees can improve resilience, self-awareness, and creativity; if used effectively, it facilitates ongoing personal and professional learning and develops practitioners capable of demonstrating their progression towards their growth objectives (Finlay, 2008). Reflection can also provide a structure in which to make sense of learning, so that concepts and theories become embedded in practice rather than remaining abstract (Finlay, 2008).

The orientation of reflection matters as much as its presence. Research in positive psychology establishes that reflection oriented around strengths, energy gains, and growth opportunities — rather than deficits and failures — produces more sustained engagement and more durable behavioural change (Ghaye, 2010). When reflection is experienced as a mechanism for recognising what is working and identifying where to go next, it becomes something individuals actively seek out rather than avoid. This framing is not a softening of the reflective process; it is a design principle grounded in evidence. A strengths-based approach to reflection reframes the developmental process as a series of opportunities rather than a cycle of self-criticism, which is particularly relevant in high-pressure professional environments where the perceived cost of failure is already high (Ghaye, 2010).

Taken together, these insights position reflection not as an optional component of personal development but as its engine. A growth mindset without structured reflection produces aspiration without direction; structured reflection without a growth mindset produces compliance without genuine investment. The two are interdependent, and any system designed to support sustained personal development must account for both.

4.2

Strategic HRM and the importance of Personal Development

While it was established that the growth mindset serves as the foundation for development (Section 4.2), this alone does not explain the specific barriers preventing development from occurring or the enablers stimulating it. To determine these specific enablers and barriers, and to move toward a concrete design intervention, it is necessary to employ analytical lenses that map the mechanics of behaviour and cognitive processing.

The decision was made to base the analysis on established theory. Evidence shows that behaviour change interventions are more effective when they are theory-based (Cane et al., 2012; Michie et al., 2011). Using theory ensures that the behaviour underlying the intervention is understood on an empirical basis rather than relying solely on researcher intuition. To obtain a comprehensive overview of the gathered data, a combination of theories is used to analyse the data through different lenses.

4.5.1

COM-B

COM-B is a framework for understanding behaviour that describes three conditions which must be met for behavioural change to occur: capability, opportunity, and motivation. These can be defined as follows (West & Michie, 2020):

- **Capability:** The individual's psychological and physical capacity to engage in the activity concerned, including the necessary knowledge and skills.
- **Opportunity:** All the factors that lie outside the individual that make the behaviour possible or prompt it.
- **Motivation:** All those brain processes that energise and direct behaviour — not just goals and conscious decision-making, but also habitual processes and emotional responses.

A "helicopter view" is taken using the COM-B model; it helps to determine on what level — the "where" — the problem mainly occurs.

4.5.2

Theoretical Domains Framework

The refined Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) (Cane et al., 2012) provides a more detailed overview of 14 domains used to label the antecedents of a behaviour. The TDF was developed through a collaboration of behavioural scientists and implementation researchers who identified theories relevant to implementation and grouped their constructs into domains, with the aim of providing a comprehensive, theory-informed approach to identifying the determinants of behaviour. The TDF can be linked to concrete steps for achieving implementation objectives accordingly (Michie et al., 2017).

The TDF therefore functions as a diagnostic tool — a more specific lens that provides a detailed description of "what" the problem is. The TDF and COM-B model can be linked to each other (Cane et al., 2012) and used complementarily. By combining these theories, a deep understanding of the data can be obtained: it organises the data and encompasses all possible factors influencing behaviour, ensuring nothing is missed. This deep understanding ensures a better grasp of what is needed for effective personal development.

The functional definitions of the respective behavioral domains, grounded in the American Psychological Association's (APA) Dictionary of Psychology, are compiled in Table 2. This matrix simultaneously illustrates the structural alignment between the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) and the overarching COM-B model, which stems from the validation work of Cane et al. (2012). To maintain analytical continuity and methodological transparency, these integrated TDF domains and COM-B components are explicitly referenced throughout the narrative of this thesis using bracketed indicators [...].

4.5.3

Dual Process Theory

Dual Process Theory highlights the distinct cognitive and neurological systems behind a behaviour, independent of the domain or condition in which it occurs. It distinguishes two systems: System 1 is based on instinct and intuition — it is automatic, fast, and related to habits — whereas System 2 requires "deep thinking," demands effort and focus, and is slow (Kahneman, 2011; Sloman, 1996).

This theory does not focus on understanding what is happening, but rather on the cognitive functioning behind a behaviour; it explains how information is processed and perceived. By understanding which system is utilised in development tasks, the required effort and focus become clear, which is a vital aspect of designing an intervention. When the used and desired systems are understood, the steps and tasks in personal development can be designed accordingly.

COM-B to TDF Mapping & Definitions (Cane et al., 2012)		
COM-B Component & Sub-component	TDF Domain	Definition (Cane et al., 2012)
Capability: Psychological	Knowledge	An awareness of the existence of something.
	Skills	An ability or proficiency acquired through practice.
	Memory, Attention and Decision Processes	The ability to retain information, focus selectively on aspects of the environment, and choose between two or more alternatives.
	Behavioural Regulation	Anything aimed at managing or changing objectively observed or measured actions.
Capability: Physical	Skills	An ability or proficiency acquired through practice.
Opportunity: Social	Social Influences	Those interpersonal processes that can cause individuals to change their thoughts, feelings, or behaviours.
Opportunity: Physical	Environmental Context and Resources	Any circumstance of a person's situation or environment that discourages or encourages the development of skills and abilities, independence, social competence, and adaptive behaviour.
Motivation: Reflective	Social/Professional Role and Identity	A coherent set of behaviours and displayed personal qualities of an individual in a social or work setting.
	Beliefs about Capabilities	Acceptance of the truth, reality, or validity about an ability, talent, or facility that a person can put to constructive use.
	Optimism	The confidence that things will happen for the best or that desired goals will be attained.
	Beliefs about Consequences	Acceptance of the truth, reality, or validity about outcomes of a behaviour in a given situation.
	Intentions	A conscious decision to perform a behaviour or a resolve to act in a certain way.
	Goals	Mental representations of outcomes or end states that an individual wants to achieve.
Motivation: Automatic	Social/Professional Role and Identity	A coherent set of behaviours and displayed personal qualities of an individual in a social or work setting.
	Optimism	The confidence that things will happen for the best or that desired goals will be attained.
	Reinforcement	Increasing the probability of a response by arranging a dependent relationship, or contingency, between the response and a given stimulus.
	Emotion	A complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioural, and physiological elements, by which the individual attempts to deal with a personally significant matter or event.

Table 2: Com-B mapped to the TDF domains with definitions

Analysis of Field Research:

5.1 Document Analysis Results

5.2 Results interviews

5.3 Defining Focus: The Methodological Synthesis Bridge

05

This chapter presents the findings of the field research, translating the raw empirical data gathered through document analysis and interviews into structured, analytical insight. Where Chapter 4 established the theoretical foundation, this chapter applies it: the frameworks introduced there (COM-B, TDF, and Dual Process Theory) are used here as the diagnostic lenses through which the data is ordered and interpreted. Section 5.1 presents the results of the document analysis, establishing the organisational hard requirements that the system must align with. Section 5.2 presents the interview findings, structured into barriers, enablers, and user desires, and synthesised into a behavioural matrix and a final diagnostic conclusion. Section 5.3 then describes the methodological funnel through which the combined findings were narrowed toward a focused design direction. Together, these sections move from a broad evidence base to a sharpened problem definition, forming the bridge into the design requirements presented in Chapter 6.

5.1 Document Analysis Results

To gain insight into the formal constraints and strategic objectives of both organisations, a systematic document analysis was conducted on internal Essense and Eidra guidelines. The main objective was to establish the hard requirements that the new system should align with, ensuring the system is valid not only for Essense but within the broader collective as well. This broader integration is essential, as the transition to Eidra has become a primary source of ambiguity for employees (Section 2.5). Establishing this baseline allows for a targeted investigation into whether strategic objectives and employee needs align or conflict.

The findings presented in this section are the product of the six-step analytical process described in Section 3.4.2. The process began with a structured mapping of available internal and public sources, followed by systematic analysis of each document against the predefined elements established in step one. Where source material was absent or incomplete, targeted gaps were identified and filled before synthesis was applied. Crucially, the synthesis step was reserved until all source material had been reviewed, ensuring that the requirements presented here reflect the full documentary landscape rather than the first available data. The output is a set of organisational hard requirements — presented in sections 5.1.1 through 5.1.4 — that establish the non-negotiable boundaries within which the design must operate.

5.1.1 Foundation

From the documents analysed, it is clear that the Eidra Foundation is the core for all personal development. This corporate foundation supersedes all development plans and holds the highest priority:

The Foundation comprises five behavioural pillars: being solution-oriented and focused on real value and impact; maintaining a positive and service-minded attitude toward everyone; acting as a professional representative and ambassador for Eidra in all interactions; being a team player who supports and includes colleagues; and being fully committed to delivering value to satisfied customers. These are not aspirational — they are the documented minimum standard against which all professional conduct, including development, is measured.

5.1.1

The implication for the design is direct. The Eidra Foundation establishes a strict cultural mandate. Any new PD architecture cannot solely focus on personal, idiosyncratic desires; it must actively reinforce these five collective behavioural pillars to ensure organisational legitimacy. This constraint is not cosmetic: a system that supports personal ambitions without anchoring them to these shared standards would be institutionally illegitimate within the Eidra structure, and would likely be resisted or ignored at the organisational level, regardless of how well it addresses individual needs.

5.1.2 Narrowed scope

Beyond the cultural mandate, the analysis of internal documents and surveys reveals a set of operational boundaries that narrow the design space considerably. Three constraints emerge here, each of which sets a non-negotiable condition on the form the new system can take.

The first is a quantitative mandate. Internal engagement data establishes a clear success metric: the new PD system must measurably improve employee satisfaction regarding professional growth to a minimum score of 7.5. This is not an aspiration — it is a documented target that makes the system accountable to a specific, measurable outcome.

The second constraint is what the documents reveal as an architectural contradiction. The system must simultaneously align with the agile, flat structure of Essense — reinforcing its core values of being open, driven, and collaborative — and with the more robust, standardised network structure of the Eidra collective. These two logics pull in different directions: one demands flexibility and employee ownership, the other demands consistency and formal alignment. Any system that satisfies one without acknowledging the other risks either organisational rejection or cultural mismatch. This contradiction will resurface in the interview findings, where employees articulate the lived experience of exactly this tension.

The third constraint is a resource ceiling. The system must remain effective and sustainable within a 4% working-hours time allocation, functioning independently of fluctuating project workloads and client allocations. This allocation is tracked and visible within Essense — employees know the 4% exists — but it functions as an organisational aspiration rather than an enforced boundary, which is itself part of the problem: the time is designated but not protected. What the allocation does establish is the intended upper bound on what the system can demand from its users: a solution that requires significantly more than 4% of working time to sustain is not viable within Essense's fast-paced client environment. The implications for the design are significant — and connect directly to the cognitive load analysis that Dual Process Theory (Chapter 4) provides the framework for.

5.1.3 System architecture in four operational loops

The guidelines set by both companies converge on four main "loops" within the system: initiation (e.g. goal setting); tracking and documentation; reflection and recognition; and training and development (the "PD action").

Read together, these four loops compose the formal architecture of what a compliant PD system must do. What the documents specify is not simply a checklist of features; it is a blueprint for a continuous, cyclical process — one in which goals are set, progress is tracked, development is reflected upon, and learning is actively pursued. The specific requirements per loop are as follows.

Goal Setting

The system must support the active setting and use of Personal Development Goals (PDGs). These goals are required to support the company's broader growth objectives and to manage expectations clearly — meaning individual ambitions must be visible and legible to the organisation, not just to the employee. Crucially, the documentation mandates that high-level goals be broken down into actionable, short-term milestones using a provided template. This formal requirement is significant: as will become apparent in Section 5.2, the absence of this scaffolding in practice is one of the most consistently named barriers across the employee cohort.

Tracking and Documentation

The system is required to enable active tracking and documentation of the development plan, objectives, and ongoing progress. The YER and mid-year evaluation framework must be utilised as the temporal anchor for this tracking. What the documents describe is a formal, continuous monitoring loop — yet what the interview findings in Section 5.2 will reveal is that this loop is almost entirely absent from the lived experience of employees: tracking is not practised, not guided, and not required in the current system. The gap between the organisational mandate and the operational reality is direct and significant.

Reflection and Recognition

Active reflection is formally mandated: the system must create structured opportunities to review and revise expectations, reflect on progress, and assess strengths and weaknesses. Alongside this, the system must enable active recognition — ensuring that developmental efforts are acknowledged and that employees experience their growth as valued. The pairing of reflection and recognition in the documents is analytically meaningful: it suggests that the organisation formally understands development not as a solo cognitive exercise, but as a social and motivational loop. Whether that loop is currently functioning is a question the interview data in Section 5.2 directly addresses.

Training and Development

The final loop concerns the PD action itself: structured and accessible training. The documents specify that the system should offer more opportunities and suggestions, provide more tailored options aligned with individual career goals, and support employees in navigating the available training budget. The repeated appearance of "more" across these requirements is not incidental — it is an implicit acknowledgement that the current offer is insufficient. The formal mandate is therefore also a gap assessment: the organisation recognises that structured training provision is missing, and that the new system must fill it.

The final organisational requirement operates at the level of system experience rather than system content. It concerns how the PD architecture should feel to the people using it. Clarity is a recurring demand across the analysed documents: the system must create clarity regarding available tools and the overall personal development process; it must provide clear, specific steps for development and progression; it must set clear expectations; and it must ensure communication is transparent, so that employees feel genuinely informed rather than passively compliant.

Alongside this, the system must operate in synergy with the tools already in use at Essense—SharePoint, Eisource, Leapsome, and Miro—to prevent duplication and ensure consistency. As the organisation migrates toward the broader Eidra ecosystem—incorporating PeopleVue, Float, Notion, and Slack—the system has been specifically engineered to accommodate this architectural shift. This alignment is rooted in the lived experience of the transition itself, ensuring the design remains functional and cohesive amidst the evolving digital landscape. Consequently, this system synergy is not a secondary design preference, but a non-negotiable architectural requirement that will function as a dealbreaker criterion in the concept evaluation described in Chapter 8.

Against these demands for structure and clarity, the documents place one equally firm condition: autonomy. Even within the formal requirements and restrictions outlined above, ownership over personal development must remain with the employee. The system must allow freedom in how goals are given form and in the level of ambition that is set. This creates a formal tension that runs through the entire document analysis: the organisation requires structure and consistency while simultaneously protecting individual agency and self-direction. This is not a contradiction to be resolved in the design but a condition to be held — the system must be designed so that both can coexist.

Taken together, the four subsections above establish the organisational envelope within which the new PD system must operate. The Eidra Foundation sets the cultural floor; the scope constraints set the operational ceiling; the four loops define the functional architecture; and the clarity-autonomy pairing defines the experiential register. What the document analysis cannot reveal — and what Section 5.2 addresses directly — is whether employees experience the current system as delivering on any of these requirements, and where the structural gaps between the formal mandate and the lived reality are most pronounced.

5.2 Results interviews

To understand the practical barriers, professional desires, and lived experiences of personal development (PD), semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse cross-section of eight Essense employees (E1–E8) of differing roles and backgrounds. Where Section 5.1 established the formal requirements the system must meet from an organisational perspective, this section examines whether those requirements are experienced as present, absent, or contradictory by the employees they are intended to serve. The main objective was to identify the root causes of the dissatisfaction found in previous surveys and to map the behavioural mechanics of the organisation — its enablers and barriers. This is crucial because, as established in the literature review (Chapter 4), design interventions are most successful when the system addresses the specific Capabilities, Opportunities, and Motivations of its users. By capturing these individual stories, the design is ensured to be not just a theoretical framework but a solution that fits the daily reality of a fast-paced agency. The interviews were primarily aimed at answering RQ2; the findings are therefore ordered into barriers, enablers, and desires. The complete list of aggregated findings in the synthesis matrix can be found in Appendix D.

The findings presented in this chapter are the product of the nine-step analytical process described in Section 3.4.3. Transcription and anonymisation preceded a familiarisation pass in which all eight interview transcripts were read in full before any coding began. Manual coding was then applied — generating initial codes directly from the data rather than from the theoretical framework, to avoid premature theoretical closure. These codes were organised into a working matrix that allowed patterns across participants to be compared systematically before thematic synthesis was applied. Only at the synthesis stage were the emerging themes linked back to the COM-B model, TDF, and Dual Process Theory, ensuring that the theoretical framework organised the findings rather than predetermined them.

The nine-step process thus ensures that the findings are grounded in the lived experience of participants, not in the pre-existing theoretical structure — a distinction that is analytically essential when the goal is to uncover the actual behavioural mechanics rather than confirm what theory already predicts.

5.2.1 Definition of Personal Development

Before examining the barriers and enablers, it is necessary to establish how employees themselves define personal development, as this definition directly shapes the scope and nature of the friction found. Participants defined PD as a combination of technical and hard skills alongside social and interpersonal soft skills (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6). For some, the meaning is partly dependent on the organisational context — that is, what PD means is influenced by the role and expectations set by the company (E1, E4). Beyond skill acquisition, reflection was identified as a key component of PD, directed at growth as a person toward a desired direction (E5, E6, E8). This variability in definition is itself a finding: the absence of a shared, company-wide definition of PD contributes directly to the ambiguity that employees experience when trying to engage with it [Psychological Capability – Knowledge].

5.2.2 System Experience

The current PD experience is described across the cohort as heavily dependent on the individual's own proactiveness and initiative (E1, E4, E5), with some employees appreciating this freedom and sense of ownership (E1, E8). However, the dominant experience is one of fragmentation: the system is perceived as overall lacking (E3, E4, E5), unclear (E1, E4, E6, E7) — particularly regarding concrete action points (E4, E6) — and not continuous (E1, E7). Ambiguity is partly rooted in the absence of onboarding information on PD when joining the company (E1, E4). Employees find it hard to integrate PD into their daily work (E1, E2, E3, E5), and a temporal gap between check-in moments is explicitly named, during which PD is deprioritised due to high workload and lack of system (E5, E6). Only one participant evaluated the current system as sufficient (E8). The tension between the desire for freedom and the need for guidance runs through nearly all of these experiences [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

5.2.3 Barriers to Personal Development

The qualitative analysis revealed that while internal motivation to grow is fundamentally high, the current system is lacking during both the inception (goal-setting) and the execution (daily workflow) phases. These systematic friction points can be sorted into three behavioural barriers.

5.2.3

Barrier 1: The "Blank Page" Problem

The first structural barrier occurs before development even begins - employees do not know where to start which creates a great cognitive barrier. Due to an open-ended framework and a lack of standardized boundaries, employees experience choice paralysis—referred to as the "Blank Page Problem."

Definition Ambiguity: The interviews show that there is ambiguity around what personal development actually is, and hence what is expected, which causes cognitive friction [Psychological Capability – Knowledge]. While there are measures for personal development goal-setting, the measures for personal development itself remain unclear; employees define PD on the basis of an unstructured and unaligned set of technical, soft, and personal growth concepts (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6).

Goal-Setting Input and Structure: The majority of participants use career development as input for their goals (E1, E4, E6, E7), alongside colleagues as examples (E1, E2, E4), gathered feedback (E5, E7, E8), and reflection (E1, E5, E6, E8). Others draw on personal goals (E2, E6) or company goals (E2, E5). A minority is able to intuitively form goals without a specific input source (E1, E8). Across the cohort, however, no set structure for goal-setting is offered by the company; not enough designated time is given to properly build and iterate on goals (E7); and as a consequence, random and unrealistic goals driven purely by YER pressure are set (E3, E4), with tactical goal-setting used to ensure an achievable result (E4). Usage of goals is inconsistent and unclear (E4, E5) [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals; Reflective Motivation – Intentions].

The Seniority Gap in Ambition Deconstruction: The capacity to break down abstract, long-term ambitions into small, actionable milestones is an unguided skill that correlates with seniority (E5, E6). Junior employees lack this capacity; without structural scaffolding or concrete examples, they are paralysed by the "blank page," leading to random, unrealistic goals (E3, E4) [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].

Barrier 2: "To-Do Fatigue" and Cognitive overload (Friction in Execution)

Once goals are established, a second barrier arises during the execution phase, actively holding employees back from working on PD. Personal development is treated as an isolated, additive task — just another item to check off a list — instead of as something beneficial and an opportunity for growth. This resistance to an extra, additive task is referred to here as "To-Do Fatigue."

The Administrative Burden: Tracking progress and documenting reflection are perceived as separate, time-consuming chores (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8). When added to an already heavy billable task list, PD triggers cognitive fatigue, causing it to be viewed as an administrative burden rather than an opportunity [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

Tracking is not done by the large majority of participants (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8). There is no company system or guidance for tracking PD progress (E2, E3), and it is not required by Essense (E6). When tracking does occur, it is driven by individual initiative alone (E6, E7) and is limited to the YER and mid-year evaluation moments (E1, E5), which participants consider insufficient (E5, E7). This absence of continuous tracking means that employees have no ongoing overview of their development, removing the foundation needed to make informed decisions about their next steps [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

Reflective practices follow a similar pattern: systematic guidance for reflection is lacking across the cohort (E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7). Reflection is only facilitated during YER and mid-year reviews (E3), making it compliance-driven rather than developmental. Continuous reflection is not required by the company (E6), and is therefore left to individual initiative (E2, E4, E5, E7, E8). Some participants are capable of naturally integrating reflection into their work (E1, E8), but this is not representative of the cohort as a whole [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

System 1 Regression Under Workload: It was agreed across the cohort that working on personal development requires effortful System 2 cognitive focus (E1–E8), with reflection and planning seen as especially effortful and focus-intensive tasks (E1, E2, E7, E8). High workloads and tight project deadlines exhaust employees and leave them without sufficient cognitive reserve for these System 2 PD tasks (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6, E7, E8). Employees stated that once a clear plan is in place, they feel able to work on integrated PD tasks in a more automated way — that is, through faster System 1 processing. Because no time is structurally protected for development, the long intervals between yearly check-ins become a "temporal gap" in which PD is completely crowded out by habitual client-work loops [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context / Decision Processes].

Barrier 3: The Reinforcement Void and Constructive Feedback Deficit

The final barrier relates to how growth is recognised and steered within the surrounding organisational culture.

The Sugarcoated Feedback Loop: Essense fosters a positive and safe environment, but this frequently results in a culture of "sugarcoating." Feedback is often unstructured, inconsistent, and overly positive, making it difficult for employees to secure the objective, constructive critique needed to spark authentic growth loops (E2, E3, E5, E6) [Social Opportunity – Social Influences]. Logistical barriers further complicate the process: client feedback is difficult to obtain or lacks sufficient grounding (E1, E2), and in-house roles struggle to collect feedback from their teams (E3). While the cultural positivity is appreciated, it leaves little room for "lesser" results or honest constructive critique — in an environment where only good things are highlighted, failure stands out more sharply and is perceived as deeply negative (E6) [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

The Lack of Formal Consequences: Personal development operates in an institutional vacuum, entirely disconnected from formal reward mechanisms or performance consequences (E1, E2, E6, E7). Growth is only formally recognised if it translates directly into short-term billable client utility (E3, E4, E6), which systematically dampens the motivation to pursue cross-functional or exploratory learning paths (E3, E4, E8) [Reflective Motivation – Reinforcement]. In addition, a psychological barrier is noticeable within the cohort: employees are highly proactive and intrinsically motivated to perform at a high level, creating a self-imposed high-pressure workload that leaves them feeling as though they cannot afford to fail.

The Role of Function and Identity in Personal Development

A finding that cuts across the barrier analysis concerns the influence of professional role and identity on PD. A majority of participants name their role (E2, E3, E4, E5) and career path (E3, E4) as having a high influence on the direction and nature of their development [TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity]. The dominant view is that PD only makes sense when it can be applied to work (E3) and that development must have added value in the work context (E2, E4, E5). Role and career development primarily influence the definition of goals and direction in PD (E6, E7, E8), reflecting the need to quantify development through skills related to one's function. Development directions outside of the role can be pursued, but employees require a sense of purpose — "why would I develop this?" — before they are willing to invest time in cross-functional learning. One divergent perspective stated that PD and growth are entirely unrelated to role (E1) [Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences; TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity].

5.2.5 Operational Limitations

Beyond the three main barriers, the field research revealed a set of practical limitations that constrain the space available for personal development at an operational level. The most frequently mentioned limitations are the role itself (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E7, E8) and the requirement that development must have direct added value in work (E4, E5, E6, E8). When working on client projects or bound to a specific project allocation, development options are further narrowed (E2, E3, E4, E6). High workload (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6, E7, E8) and limited time (E1, E2, E3, E6, E7) are the most universally cited constraints. Regarding training specifically, employees feel limited and discouraged by the approval required to access training (E1, E4, E7) and by the associated costs (E1, E4). The lack of support (E5, E6, E7) and structure (E5, E6) further narrows the perceived room for development. Lastly, seniority and tenure influence the ability to work on PD without a system, to integrate it into daily work, and to identify the right next steps (E4, E5, E6, E7) [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources; Psychological Capability – Skills].

Empirical Enablers of Personal Development

Despite these barriers, the field research highlighted distinct behavioural levers and cultural drivers that can be utilised to support the new system.

Enabler 1: The Psychosocial Baseline (Innate Growth Mindset and Safety)

The internal culture of Essense provides an ideal psychological foundation for behavioural change interventions.

Collective Growth Mindset: All employees interviewed hold a growth mindset, establishing a shared baseline across the cohort (E1–E8). This aligns with the literature, which establishes a strong correlation between a growth mindset and a creative background (Karwowski, 2017). It is worth noting that some participants do not hold the motivation to grow all capabilities equally (E3, E4, E8), and the learning curve is acknowledged to become less steep with increasing seniority (E4) — nuances that the system should account for. Employees possess an intrinsic belief in their capacity for continuous learning and self-improvement (E5), meaning the system does not need to generate motivation from scratch, but rather channel it [Reflective Motivation – Optimism; TDF – Beliefs about Capabilities].

The Wiggle Room to Fail: A significant majority of participants experience deep organisational trust and feel they have the structural freedom to try new things and potentially fail (E1, E2, E4, E6, E7, E8), provided the failure is communicated with transparency (E8) [Social Opportunity – Psychological Safety].

Enabler 2: Relational Scaffolding and Seniority Capital

The organisation possesses structural assets that can be leveraged to transition from unguided autonomy to supported growth. Coaching and Institutional Support: Employees express high optimism and enthusiasm surrounding the reintroduction of dedicated PD coaching (E1, E7) and the newly introduced Eidra Academy (E7, E8). These frameworks provide a highly welcomed baseline for external accountability and structured guidance [Social Opportunity – Social Influences]. The Seniority System: Senior practitioners have naturally developed self-created tracking systems and reflective habits within PD (E5, E8). Seniority also relates to the ability to get a clear overview of one's development trajectory and identify the right directions to take (E5). This "seniority capital" — the tacit knowledge of how to structure one's own development — can potentially be operationalised as a blueprint to guide more junior employees (E5, E6) [Psychological Capability – Skills; TDF – Knowledge].

Generative User Desires: The
5.2.7 Blueprint for Intervention

Beyond enablers and barriers, a further goal of the interviews was to expose the desires surrounding personal development. These user-identified opportunities can be used to directly counter the "Blank Page" problem and "To-Do Fatigue" [Reflective Motivation – Intentions / Goals].

Structural Protection & Guidance: To combat To-Do Fatigue, employees express a strong desire for continuous structural support rather than periodic check-ins (E2, E6, E7). This includes the integration of a "buddy system" (E2) and structured accountability within the coaching process to help protect PD time when project workloads fluctuate (E5, E6) [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

Goal Dissection: To resolve the Blank Page problem, there is a clear demand for assistance in deconstructing broad, yearly YER ambitions into actionable, short-term milestones (E1, E3, E4, E5, E7) [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].

Examples to Spark Inspiration: Employees require examples of training directions and pathways, possibly drawn from other employees' experiences (E1, E3, E4, E5), to eliminate the ambiguity of "not knowing what is possible" [Psychological Capability – Knowledge / Skills]. A specific desire for a different training format was also expressed — including in-house and group training options — as a way to make development more accessible and socially embedded (E7) [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

Frictionless Routine Integration: Half of the interviewed cohort explicitly requests a dedicated system for continuous progress tracking and reflection (E2, E3, E5, E6) — on the condition that these tools are integrated directly into their daily communication channels and work routines to prevent extra workload (E2, E6, E7) [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context]. Furthermore, employees desire support in applying PD outcomes directly to their daily work (E2, E6, E7), bridging the gap between development activity and practical utility [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences].

Coaching Quality and Safety: Within the newly introduced coaching system, users desire a match made on the basis of personality to maximise psychological safety (E7). They further suggest a two-way feedback loop between coach and coachee (E7), alongside external guidance for the coaches themselves to bring fresh perspectives into the agency (E8) [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

Transparency and Cultural Shift: Finally, the cohort desires the open display of failure to counter the "overly positive" environment, creating a space where failure is a chance to learn rather than something to hide (E7). Connected to this is the need for absolute transparency regarding how PD relates to formal evaluations, rewards, and career consequences (E3) [Reflective Motivation – Reinforcement]. A further desire, noted as out of scope for this project but of clear influence on PD, concerns feedback quality: employees request more specific (E1) and more nuanced (E3) feedback, as the current informality of feedback limits its usefulness as input for development goals.

Interview Findings: Overview

The six insights distilled from the interview analysis are summarised in Figure 4. Each insight represents a pattern surfacing across the majority of the cohort, rated on a scale of seven to reflect how consistently it was mentioned. Taken together, they reveal a picture in which the problem is not a lack of willingness but a lack of structure: the highest-rated insights cluster around the absence of a continuous system, the cognitive barrier of not knowing where to begin, and the tension between autonomy and guidance. Figure 5 maps these findings across the three COM-B pillars, making visible the structural distribution of the problem: barriers concentrate at the level of Automatic Motivation and Physical Opportunity, while the Capability pillar — where intrinsic growth mindset and existing skills sit — remains comparatively intact. This distribution directly informs the design focus established in Section 5.2.9.

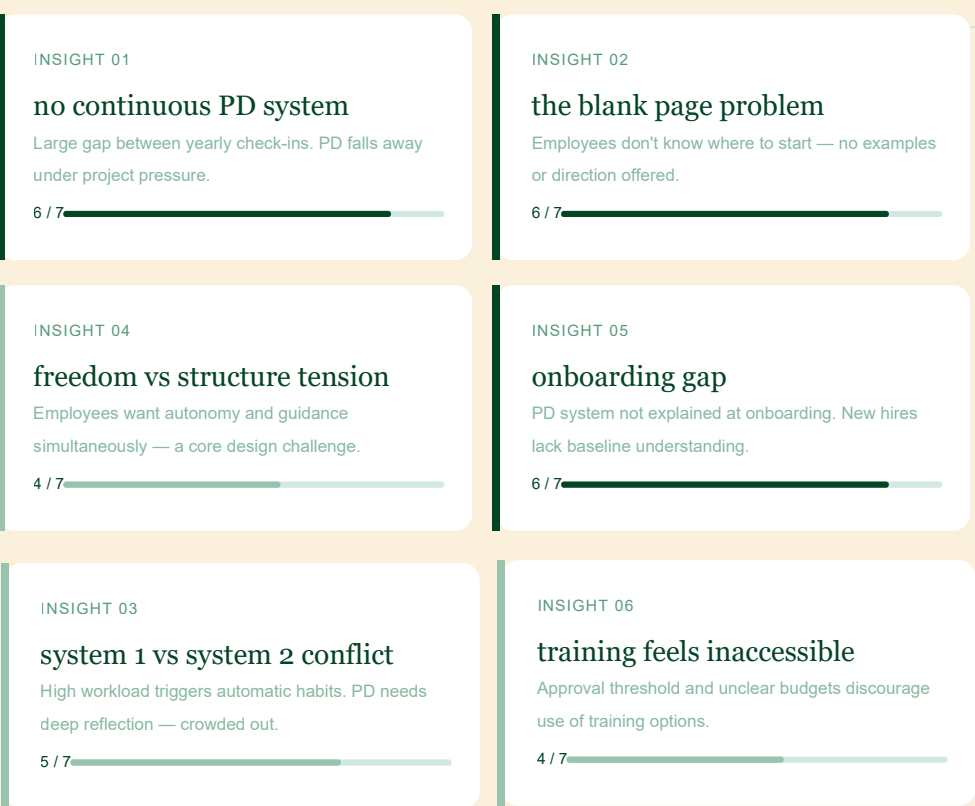


Figure 4 : The six most consistent insights from the interview analysis, each rated by how frequently the pattern appeared across the cohort of seven participants.

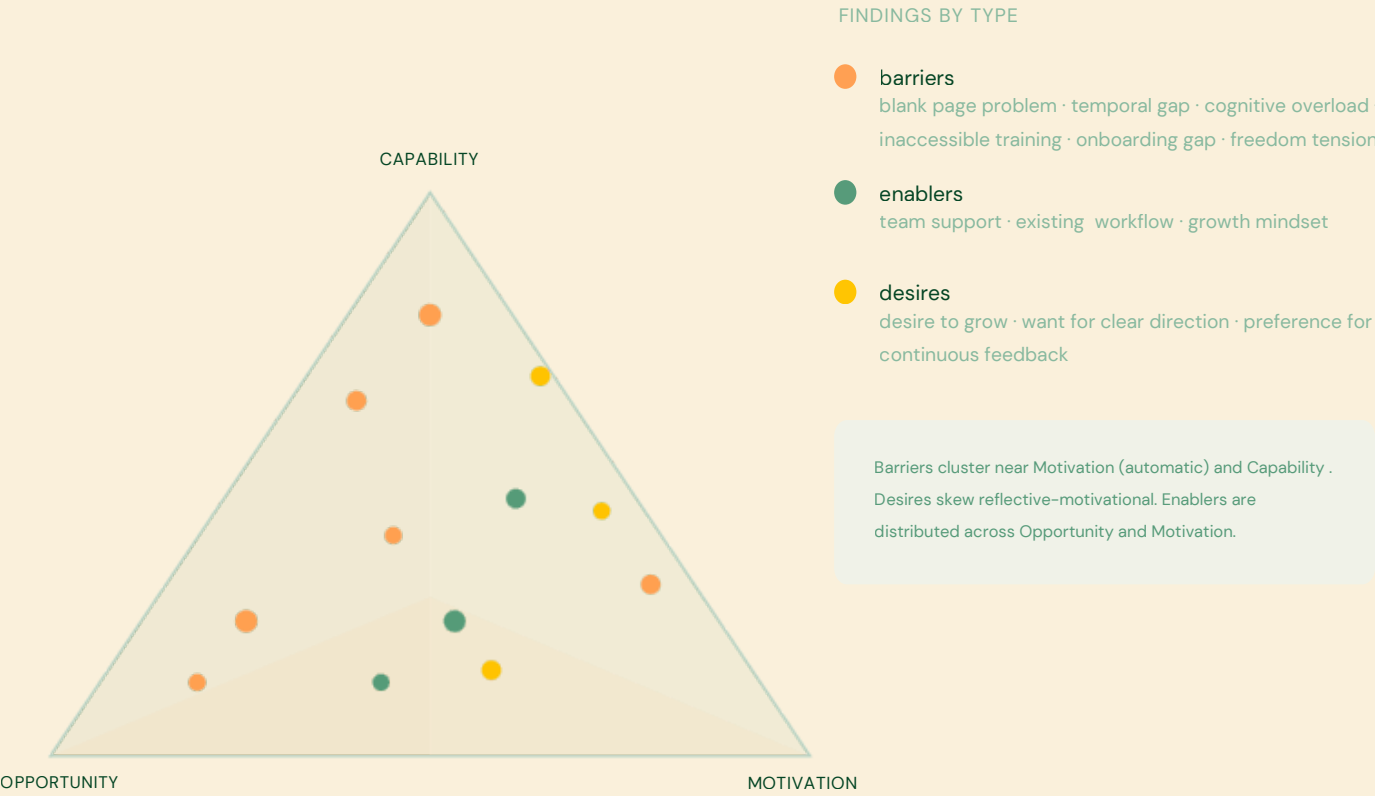


Figure 5: Interview findings distributed across the COM-B pillars. Barriers cluster at Automatic Motivation and Physical Opportunity; Capability remains comparatively intact, indicating the problem is structural rather than dispositional.

To bridge the gap between these empirical findings and the design requirements presented in Chapter 6, the following matrix maps the synthesised barriers, enablers, and user desires against the core behavioural pillars.

COM-B TDF DOMAIN ⚠ SYSTEMIC BARRIER · THE FRICTION ⬆ ORGANISATIONAL ENABLER · THE LEVER ➡ GENERATIVE USER DESIRE · BLUEPRINT				
CAPABILITY	Knowledge & Skills Psychological Capability	The Blank Page Problem Choice paralysis and inability to deconstruct broad ambitions into actionable steps. Employees cannot identify where to start. E5, E6	Seniority Blueprint Internalised planning frameworks exist within senior staff. Tacit knowledge can be made explicit and shared. E5, E8	Micro-Milestone Scaffolding Explicit examples of training directions and development pathways. A curated menu of possibilities to eliminate the blank page. E1, E3, E4, E5
	Behavioural Regulation Psychological Capability	Administrative Burden Tracking and reflection treated as compliance-driven, episodic chores. Tracking is structurally absent for the majority of the cohort. E1, E5	Intrinsic Reflection Some employees recognise that reflection is the engine of growth — an existing internal lever to build upon. E5, E6	Frictionless Integration Digital tools integrated directly into daily work and communication routines — PD happens alongside work, not on top of it. E2, E3, E5, E6
OPPORTUNITY	Social / Professional Role & Identity Psychological Capability	Role Dependency Development is only felt as valid when it has direct utility in work, narrowing the perceived scope of personal development. E3, E4, E5	Appreciated Autonomy Employees value the freedom to define PD on their own terms — autonomy is a strong intrinsic motivator to preserve. E1, E8	Application in Work Support in translating PD outcomes directly into daily work practice — closing the loop between learning and doing. E2, E6, E7
	Environmental Context Physical Opportunity	To-Do Fatigue Shifting client allocations and workloads crowd out reflection loops. Training access further limited by approval requirements and costs. E2, E8 · access: E1, E4, E7	Coaching Scaffolding Reintroduced coaching frameworks offer a baseline structural support layer that can be built upon systematically. E1, E7	Structural Protection Accountability layers to actively "shield" dedicated PD time from project pressure — creating a structural right to develop. E2, E6, E7
	Social Influences Social Opportunity	Sugarcoated Feedback Low constructive friction in feedback culture prevents objective capability mapping and growth-oriented challenge. E2, E3, E5	Psychological Safety Deep organisational trust and collaborative agency values — a strong cultural foundation for building honest developmental dialogue. E5, E6, E8	Coaching Architecture Two-way feedback flows and personality-based coach matching — making developmental conversations substantive and tailored. E7, E8
MOTIVATION	Reinforcement Automatic Motivation	Value Restriction Growth is only recognised if it translates directly into immediate client utility — narrowing what counts as valid development. E3, E4, E6	Collective Growth Mindset Intrinsic belief in continuous learning across the entire cohort — a shared cultural value that drives intrinsic motivation. E1–E8	Transparency Clear communication regarding evaluation criteria, development rewards, and career consequences — making the stakes of PD visible. E3

Table 3: Behavioral Synthesis Matrix of findings mapped to COM-B and TDF

To transition from the raw interview data to a strategic design focus, the synthesised findings were re-examined through the COM-B model as a diagnostic lens, allowing the empirical material to be interpreted not only descriptively but argumentatively. This analysis reveals that the primary friction underlying the dissatisfaction with personal development at Essense does not lie at the level of Capability. The employees interviewed possess a strong internal growth mindset (Section 5.2.6) and the technical skill set required to engage with continuous learning; the impediment is therefore not located in what they are able to do, but in the conditions under which they are able to do it.

Rather, the root cause of the observed dissatisfaction is a structural deficit in Opportunity and Automatic Motivation. Project dependency operates as a physical barrier that prevents personal development from consolidating into a continuous habit; the temporal gap between yearly check-in moments is consistently overwritten by client work rather than bridged by sustained developmental activity. This finding is further sharpened when interpreted through the lens of Dual Process Theory. The field research demonstrated that intense client workloads consistently depleted employees' System 2 reserves, triggering a regression to habitual System 1 loops centred on billable project work. This is not a motivational failure; it is a structural energy depletion problem. The strategic design response is therefore not to demand more effort from employees, but to redesign the system to reduce cognitive load: routine tracking and documentation must be absorbed into low-effort System 1 interactions, while System 2 capacity is preserved for the genuinely reflective and developmental tasks that require it.

Hence, the system does not fail because employees are unable or unwilling to develop, but because the environmental opportunity is absent and the cognitive friction is consistently too high to overcome. This diagnostic conclusion shifts the design problem from a question of motivation to one of architecture, and provides the strategic rationale for prioritising continuous, sustainable activity and the breaking down of high-level ambitions in the following chapter, which directly target these two structural failures.

From the document analysis and the interview analysis, more than 40 requirements were identified; to move toward ideation, a clear focus was needed. To establish a clear design direction while ensuring a repeatable process, the initial findings were subjected to a multi-stage funnel. First, items were prioritised where literature, company documents, and interviews overlapped, ensuring source triangulation. For instance, while interviews surfaced the desire for "a structured framework for setting PD goals," this lacked overlap with the document analysis and literature and was subsequently deprioritised in favour of "the system must enable active reflection," which was found across all three sources. Simultaneously, all requirements were checked for alignment with the research questions. This "dual-gate" approach narrowed the list to 17 requirements.

To further refine the selection, nine prioritisation criteria based on strategic fit and feasibility were applied:

1. Stakeholder Priority: Alignment with the interests of stakeholders.
2. Mention Frequency: Frequency of the mentioned elements.
3. User Pain Points: The severity of the barrier for the employee.
4. Practical Feasibility: How realistic the requirement is.
5. Scope Viability: Whether it is viable within the boundaries set by the project scope.
6. System Gap Analysis: Whether it provides a new solution rather than duplicating existing tools.
7. Baseline Alignment: Whether it fits the current organisational direction.
8. Mutual Exclusivity: Ensuring requirements do not overlap or conflict.
9. Definition Clarity: Ensuring the requirement is clear and well-researched.

Subsequently, to incorporate external validation, a stickering session was conducted with alumni from IDE TU Delft, who leveraged their working experience to evaluate professional relevance. This session resulted in six requirements deemed most fruitful in a real-world context. Based on the research conducted and the acquired "expert view" of the problem space, a strategic choice was made to perform the final cut. The final five requirements were validated with both Eidra and Essense, ensuring alignment; both organisations agreed upon the set focus and found it to be a robust starting point for ideation.

What the field research has produced through this process is not a list of desirable features but a diagnostic verdict with a clear structural logic. The Capability dimension is not where the system fails: Essense employees hold a strong and consistent growth mindset, possess the skills required to engage with continuous development, and are — in the language of COM-B — willing to develop. The failure is environmental. Personal development is structurally overwritten by project pressure, by the absence of a continuous support architecture, by the cognitive cost of initiating development from a blank slate, and by the temporal gap between evaluation moments in which no developmental activity is sustained. These are not individual failures of discipline or ambition; they are systemic conditions that no amount of employee motivation can overcome alone. Chapter 6 translates this diagnostic verdict into its concrete form: five requirements that do not describe desirable features, but the minimum structural conditions under which sustained personal development becomes possible at Essense.

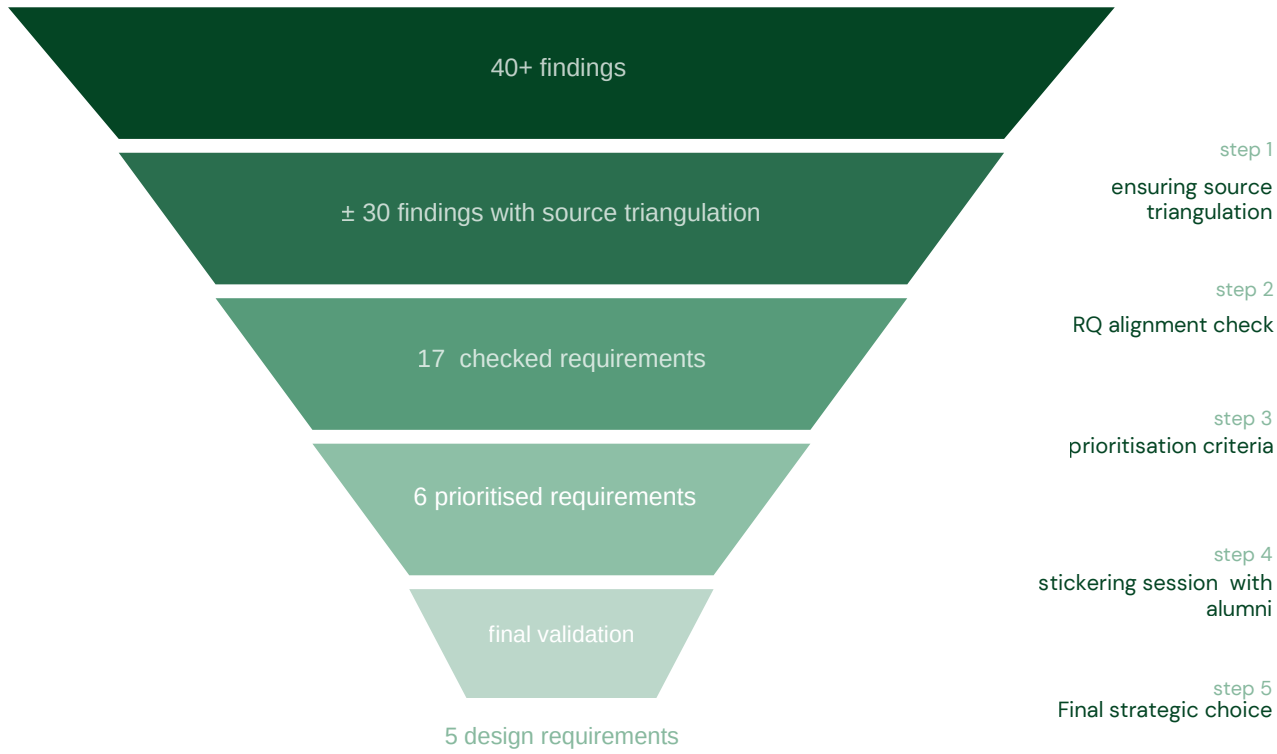


Figure 6: Visualisation of the design funnel used

Synthesis: Design requirements

6.1 Answering RQ1 and RQ2

6.2 Pinpoint problem

6.3 Final requirements

6.4 Definitive design challenge

06

This chapter marks the closing of the first diamond of the Double Diamond — the end of the research and problem-definition phase. With the field research analysed and synthesised in Chapter 5, the focus now shifts from understanding the problem to defining the direction for solving it. This chapter answers the first two research questions directly, consolidates the empirical findings into a pinpointed problem definition, and formulates the five design requirements that will serve as the strategic foundation for the ideation phase. Every requirement presented here is traceable to a specific friction point identified in the field research and validated through the methodological funnel described in Section 5.3.

6.1 Answering RQ1 and RQ2

6.1.1 Answering RQ1

RQ1: What are the professional growth desires of Essense employees and requirements from Essense and Eidra in PD that need to be met?

The professional growth desires of Essense employees were uncovered through the interview analysis (Section 5.2.7). A detailed overview can be found there. The most prominent desires centre on continuous structural support rather than periodic check-ins, assistance in breaking down high-level ambitions into concrete steps, frictionless integration of PD into daily workflows, and concrete examples of training directions and pathways. Underlying all of these is a consistent tension: employees simultaneously desire structure and freedom — they want guidance without losing ownership over their own development.

From the document analysis (Section 5.1), a set of 14 organisational requirements was established, covering the Eidra Foundation pillars, the four operational loops (goal-setting, tracking, reflection, training), and the overarching demands for system synergy, clarity, and autonomy. These requirements set the non-negotiable boundaries within which the design must operate. Both the desires and the organisational requirements were validated with representatives from Essense and Eidra to ensure that the identified focus adequately addresses this research question.

6.1.2 Answering RQ2

RQ2: What are the current drivers and barriers for Essense employees to actively work on PD?

The drivers and barriers were the primary objective of the interview analysis (Section 5.2) and are described in full in that chapter. The most prominently identified drivers and barriers are summarised to the right..

6.1.2

Drivers:

- **Growth Mindset:** The team holds a collective and strong internal drive and a natural belief in their capacity for continuous learning (E1–E8) [Reflective Motivation – Optimism; Beliefs about Capabilities].
- **Positive Culture:** The working environment is inherently supportive of professional improvement and fosters a high level of psychological safety (E1, E2, E4, E6, E7, E8) [Social Opportunity – Psychological Safety].
- **Trust in the Company:** Employees hold a high level of trust in Essense as a long-term environment for career growth [Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences].
- **Freedom & Ownership:** The autonomy to lead one's own development is highly valued and actively motivating (E1, E8) [Reflective Motivation – Intentions].
- **Seniority Capital:** Senior employees have developed self-created systems for tracking and reflection, providing an internal blueprint for structured development (E5, E8) [Psychological Capability – Skills].

Barriers:

- **No Tracking & Reflection:** There is currently no consistent habit, guidance, or system for documenting learning and progress — tracking is absent for the large majority of the cohort (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8) [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].
- **Project Dependency & Workload:** PD is consistently deprioritised when project pressure rises, creating a temporal gap between yearly check-in moments in which development activity ceases entirely (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6, E7, E8) [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].
- **Definitional Ambiguity:** There is no shared understanding of what personal development means within Essense, causing cognitive friction before development has even begun (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6) [Psychological Capability – Knowledge].
- **Role Dependency:** Development is only felt as valid when it has direct utility in work, which narrows the perceived scope of PD and limits cross-functional exploration (E2, E3, E4, E5) [TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity].
- **Lack of System & Structure:** Without a clear, structured backbone, PD efforts are fragmented, difficult to maintain, and disconnected from formal evaluation and recognition mechanisms (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7) [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Reflective Motivation – Reinforcement].

6.2 Pinpoint problem

The synthesis of the document analysis and the interview findings converges on a single diagnostic conclusion: the core problem is not a lack of motivation, but a systematic architecture failure. The transition to Eidra has caused ambiguity among employees and added complexity to the agile and flat organisational structure of Essense. What is missing is the connective tissue to sustain PD in between evaluation moments. Consequently, employees get trapped in a cycle of setting high-level ambitions that are deprioritised once project pressure rises, unable to bridge the gap between intention and action due to definitional ambiguity, cognitive overload, and the complete absence of a continuous structure.

As established in the diagnostic conclusion of Section 5.2.9, this is not a motivational failure — that is, the problem does not lie in employees being unwilling or insufficiently driven to develop — it is a failure of Opportunity and Automatic Motivation within the COM-B framework: the environmental and habitual conditions that make sustained behaviour structurally possible are absent. The system does not fail because employees are unwilling to develop, but because the environmental conditions make sustained development structurally impossible. The design response must therefore address the architecture of the system, not the attitude of the employee.

6.3 Final requirements

As a result of the methodological funnel described in Section 5.3 — source triangulation, dual-gate filtering, nine prioritisation criteria, external validation with IDE TU Delft alumni, and final validation with Essense and Eidra — the following five requirements have been selected as the strategic focus of the ideation phase. Each requirement is directly traceable to a specific empirical friction point and is framed in terms of its impact on the final solution.

Requirement 1: Continuous, Sustainable Activity:
The PD system must be continuous and sustainable, effectively bridging the temporal gaps between mid-year and year-end evaluations.

Rationale: This is the primary structural requirement and the most critical thread running through the entire research phase. The temporal gap — the period between check-in moments in which PD is entirely crowded out by client work — was identified as the central operational failure of the current system (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 2). It was found in all three research sources: literature confirms that behavioural change requires sustained reinforcement (Michie et al., 2011); the document analysis mandates a continuous and sustainable system; and the interviews demonstrate that PD without structural continuity defaults to a compliance-driven, episodic activity disconnected from real growth. Without resolving this gap first, no other requirement can function — a system that is only used twice a year cannot address any of the other barriers identified [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context / Decision Processes].

6.3

Requirement 2: Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions:
The system must provide a framework to break down high-level ambitions into actionable, short-term, and concrete milestones.

Rationale: The "Blank Page Problem" (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 1) was one of the most consistently named barriers across the cohort. The inability to translate broad, yearly YER ambitions into concrete steps is not a motivation problem — it is a Capability gap that correlates directly with seniority (E5, E6). Without structured scaffolding, junior employees set random or tactically chosen goals driven by YER pressure rather than genuine development intent (E3, E4). This requirement directly counters that gap. Furthermore, the desire for goal dissection was one of the most frequently and explicitly stated desires across the cohort (E1, E3, E4, E5, E7), confirming both the severity of the barrier and the legitimacy of the requirement [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].

Requirement 3: Active tracking:
The system must enable active tracking and documentation of development plans, objectives, and progress throughout the year.

Rationale: Tracking was identified as entirely absent for the large majority of the cohort (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8) — not because employees do not see its value, but because no system or guidance exists to support it (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 2). Without tracking, there is no ongoing overview of development, no foundation for making informed decisions about next steps, and no evidence base for YER conversations. The document analysis mandates active tracking as a hard requirement; the field research confirms it is structurally missing. This requirement therefore fills a gap that is both organisationally mandated and empirically urgent [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

Requirement 4: Active reflection:
Active reflection on progress, strengths, and weaknesses must be a formal, required component of the PD process.

Rationale: Reflection was identified in the field research as systematically absent outside of YER and mid-year moments (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 2), making it compliance-driven rather than developmental. As established through Dual Process Theory (Chapter 4), reflection is an effortful System 2 task — it requires protected time and cognitive space that the current system does not provide. Without reflection, employees cannot develop the self-knowledge needed to make their development genuinely personal and tailored to their specific needs and aspirations, rather than purely business-goal driven. The document analysis also mandates active reflection as a core loop of the system. This requirement ensures that the system creates the conditions for reflection, rather than leaving it to individual initiative [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

Requirement 5 Concrete Suggestions and Examples
The system must provide concrete suggestions and examples of development directions and available tools.

Rationale: The desire for examples was one of the most frequently expressed wishes across the cohort (E1, E3, E4, E5) and connects directly to the Blank Page Problem (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 1). Employees do not know what is possible — there are no examples of training directions, no accessible overview of available resources, and no peer experiences to draw inspiration from. This creates a situation in which employees cannot even begin to identify what they want to develop, let alone how. Furthermore, training access is currently limited by approval requirements and costs (E1, E4, E7), making the provision of structured and accessible examples a practical necessity as well as a motivational one. This requirement resolves the entry barrier to PD by providing a curated "menu" of possibilities rather than an open, undefined space [Psychological Capability – Knowledge / Skills; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

The five requirements, the empirical friction each resolves, their position within the COM-B diagnosis, and the research sources that triangulate them are summarised in the table on the next page.

DEFINITIVE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

DR1 Continuous, Sustainable Activity The PD system must be continuous and sustainable, effectively bridging the temporal gaps between mid-year and year-end evaluations.	DR2 Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions The system must provide a framework to break down high-level ambitions into actionable, short-term, and concrete milestones.	DR3 Active tracking The system must enable active tracking and documentation of development plans, objectives, and progress throughout the year.	DR4 Active reflection The system must enable active reflection so that actions can be taken upon this accordingly.	DR5 Concrete suggestions and examples Give the employee a concrete example and "start" of their development.
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The five requirements, the empirical friction each resolves, their position within the COM-B diagnosis, and the research sources that triangulate them are summarised in the table below. Every requirement is grounded in at least two independent research sources and maps to a specific dimension of the behavioural diagnosis — confirming that the design focus is a direct translation of the empirical evidence, not a matter of researcher preference.

Figure 7: Final requirements

Req.	Name	Core friction resolved	COM-B / TDF dimension	Sources
R1	Continuous, Sustainable Activity	The Temporal Gap — PD crowded out between check-in moments; no continuous support structure (5.2.3, Barrier 2)	Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context	Literature + Documents + Interviews (all)
R2	Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions	The Blank Page Problem — inability to translate yearly ambitions into concrete steps; seniority-linked Capability gap (5.2.3, Barrier 1)	Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals	Interviews (E1, E3, E4, E5, E7) + Documents
R3	Active Tracking	Tracking absent for the majority; no ongoing overview or evidence base for YER conversations (5.2.3, Barrier 2)	Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention & Decision Processes	Documents (mandated) + Interviews (E1, E3–E8)
R4	Active Reflection	Reflection compliance-driven and episodic; System 2 task without protected time or structure (5.2.3, Barrier 2)	Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention & Decision Processes	Literature (Dual Process Theory) + Documents + Interviews
R5	Concrete Suggestions and Examples	No examples, no resource overview, no peer experiences; entry barrier to PD (5.2.7; 5.2.3, Barrier 1)	Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Physical Opportunity – Resources	Interviews (E1, E3, E4, E5) + Documents

Table 4 ; The five requirements, the empirical friction each resolves, their position within the COM-B diagnosis, and the research sources that triangulate them are summarised in the table.

6.4 Definitive design challenge

With the five requirements established, the pinpoint problem confirmed, and both research questions answered, the first diamond closes. The following definitive design challenge captures the Essence of what the second diamond must solve:

DEFINITIVE DESIGN CHALLENGE

How might we bridge the temporal gap between yearly check-in moments by creating a sustainable and continuous personal development system that serves as a backbone for existing PD tools and functions as a single source of truth — resolving the Blank Page Problem and To-Do Fatigue while operating within the structural and cultural boundaries of both Essense and Eidra?

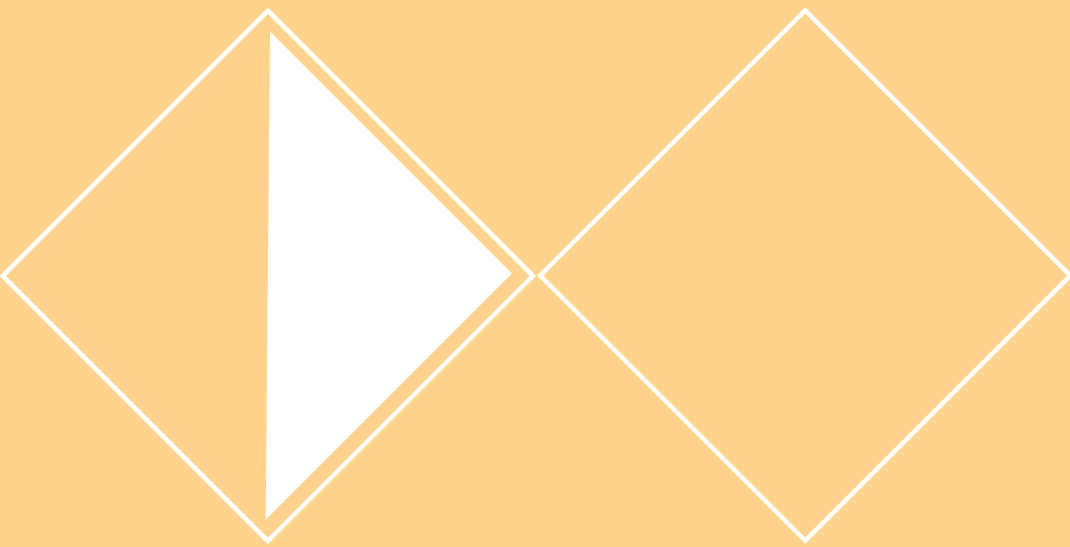
With the design challenge formulated and the five requirements confirmed as the non-negotiable foundation for the ideation phase, the question that now follows is not what to solve — that is established — but how to move from a diagnosis toward a direction. The transition into the Develop phase is not a creative leap; it is a methodologically grounded step. Co-creation with Essense employees is the first move, chosen precisely because the requirements established in this chapter were derived partly from those employees' experience. The same people who informed the problem definition are the most qualified to open the solution space — not as evaluators of a pre-formed concept, but as active co-designers of the possibility space. Chapter 7 documents how that session was designed, executed, and synthesised into three analytically grounded concept directions.

B Define

Divergent phase - chapter 1-3

In this phase

- Literature review
- Interview analysis
- Document analysis
- Found requirements



PHASE SUMMARY

The Define phase has produced three outputs. First, a theoretical foundation: the COM-B model, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory together provide the diagnostic architecture through which the empirical data is ordered — not imposed onto the findings, but applied after the data had been coded, ensuring that the theory organises rather than predetermines the conclusions. Second, a behavioural diagnosis: the root cause of personal development failure at Essense is not a deficit in willingness or growth orientation, but a systematic deficit in Opportunity and Automatic Motivation — an environmental architecture that makes sustained PD structurally impossible regardless of individual intent. The Blank Page Problem, To-Do Fatigue, and the Reinforcement Void are not individual failures; they are predictable outcomes of the current system's design. Third, five validated design requirements: Continuous Sustainable Activity; Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions; Active Tracking; Active Reflection; and Concrete Suggestions and Examples — each traceable to specific empirical evidence and confirmed through external validation.

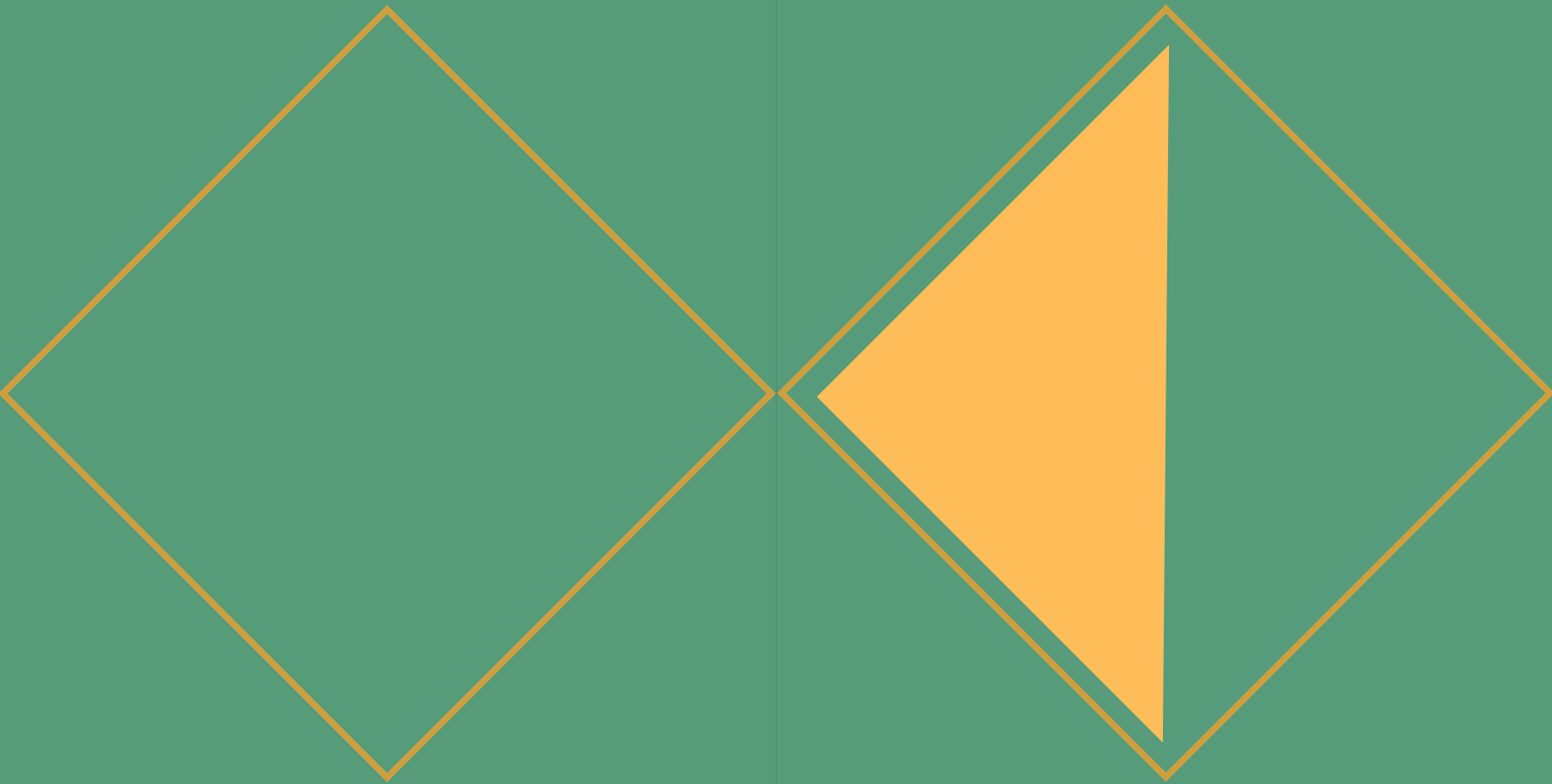
These outputs close the first diamond. The question is now no longer what the problem is — it is what a valid solution looks like. The Develop phase that follows takes the five requirements as its non-negotiable foundation and moves through co-creation, concept evaluation, prototyping, and validation to answer that question empirically.

C Develop

Divergent phase - chapter 7-9

In this phase

- Co-creation
- Concept development
- Harris evaluation
- Prototype development
- User testing



PHASE INTRODUCTION

The Develop phase is where the analytical conclusions of the Define phase are translated into a testable design response. Its purpose is not to generate ideas freely but to move deliberately — from validated requirements through structured co-creation, to three concept directions, to a single selected concept, to a high-fidelity prototype, to empirical validation with end-users and company representatives.

Three chapters constitute this phase. Chapter 7 documents the co-creation session with Essense employees — the methodological entry point into ideation — and the multi-stage synthesis that translated the session output into three analytically grounded concept directions. Chapter 8 documents the Harris profile evaluation through which those three directions were comparatively assessed and a single hybrid concept was selected. Chapter 9 documents the prototyping process, the user testing with four Essense employees, the company validation sessions with Essense and Eidra, and the final design iteration made on the basis of those findings.

The output of the Develop phase is an empirically validated, fully functional system — tested with end-users, refined on the basis of that evidence, and ready for immediate organisational deployment. The system is complete; what it awaits is not further development but the administrative integration permissions that will connect it to the live Eidra infrastructure. The Deliver phase that follows presents the final system in full and closes the academic argument.

Co-creation and concept finding

- 7.1 Rationale for co-creation
- 7.2 Execution: co-creation session plan
- 7.3 Synthesis of the co-creation
- 7.4 clustering & finding of concepts
- 7.5 selection and description of concepts

07

With the five design requirements established and validated in Chapter 6, the project transitions from the Define phase into the Develop phase of the Double Diamond. This chapter documents the process by which the empirical findings and requirements were translated into a structured possibility space for the new personal development system. The chapter is organised into two distinct stages. Section 7.1 establishes the strategic rationale for co-creation as the methodological entry point into ideation. Sections 7.2 through 7.3 detail the execution and multi-stage synthesis of the co-creation session, producing a validated and filtered set of ideas. Sections 7.4 and 7.5 describe the clustering process through which those ideas were distilled into three distinct concept directions, each of which is described and positioned against the design requirements. The output of this chapter — three analytically grounded and user-validated concept directions — forms the foundation for the comparative evaluation conducted in Chapter 8.

7.1 Rationale for co-creation

The transition from requirements to ideation presented a strategic choice: whether to develop concept directions independently, drawing on the diagnostic conclusions of Chapter 5, or to involve employees in generating the possibility space itself. The decision to pursue co-creation was not made on the basis of participatory design as a principle alone, but for three interconnected strategic reasons grounded in the specific context of Essense.

First, the diagnostic conclusion of Section 5.2 established that the root cause of PD failure at Essense is a structural deficit in Opportunity and Automatic Motivation — not a Capability gap. This means that the employees themselves hold the tacit knowledge of what conditions would make sustained PD feel possible; their practical experience of the barriers is precisely the kind of insight that cannot be extracted from a literature review or document analysis alone [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources; Reflective Motivation – Intentions]. Accessing this knowledge through co-creation therefore serves an analytical function, not merely a participatory one.

Second, the Blank Page Problem identified in Section 5.2.3 — the experience of choice paralysis in the absence of structured starting points — applies not only to personal development but to ideation itself. A purely researcher-led ideation process would reproduce the same dynamic it was designed to resolve: a set of ideas generated without the constraints of lived organisational experience. By involving employees in generating and validating directions, the ideation is grounded in the specific operational realities of a fast-paced creative agency [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context]. Third, involving employees in shaping the direction of the system from the outset addresses a structural enabler identified in Section 5.2.6: the desire for ownership over personal development. A system whose architecture was co-constructed with its users is more likely to sustain engagement over time than one delivered to them as a finished product [Reflective Motivation – Intentions; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

The brainwriting method was selected specifically because it maximises idea generation while remaining independent of group hierarchy — a deliberate choice given Essense's seniority dynamics, which were identified in Section 5.2.3 as a contributor to the Blank Page Problem among less-experienced employees. By generating ideas individually before sharing them with the group, brainwriting prevents the early convergence that occurs when senior voices dominate group discussion, ensuring that all participants contribute with equal structural footing [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

Execution: co-creation session plan

A 90-minute hybrid session was conducted with five Essense employees of varying roles and seniority levels, ensuring that the generated ideas reflected the full range of the system's intended user base. The session utilised a structured brainwriting method, in which each participant independently generated ideas in response to five 'How Might We' (HMW) prompts before these were shared and built upon collectively. The HMW prompts were derived directly from the five design requirements established in Chapter 6, ensuring that ideation was anchored to the empirically validated friction points rather than to open-ended creative speculation. This traceability between requirement and prompt is essential: it ensures that no idea generated in this session is disconnected from the behavioural barriers identified in Chapter 5.

- The mapping between each HMW and its corresponding requirement is as follows:
- **HMW 1** → Requirement 1 (Continuous, Sustainable Activity): How might we make personal development feel continuous and natural rather than an episodic, compliance-driven task?
 - **HMW 2** → Requirement 2 (Breaking Down Ambitions): How might we help employees translate their high-level YER ambitions into concrete, actionable steps they can take this week?
 - **HMW 3** → Requirement 3 (Active Tracking): How might we make it effortless for employees to keep an ongoing record of their development without it feeling like additional administration?
 - **HMW 4** → Requirement 4 (Active Reflection): How might we build reflection into the rhythm of working life so that it happens continuously rather than only at formal review moments?
 - **HMW 5** → Requirement 5 (Concrete Suggestions and Examples): How might we provide employees with a curated, accessible menu of development directions and resources that eliminates the "Blank Page" when starting?

Following the brainwriting phase, initial clustering was performed during the session to identify emerging patterns across the generated ideas. This was followed by dot-voting to surface preferences, and a closing discussion in which participants elaborated on their choices, named concerns, and identified directions that felt most viable within the actual operational reality of working at Essense. No warm-up exercise was included in the session plan, as the participating group consisted of experienced designers already familiar with design research methods; time was more valuably spent on substantive generation and discussion.

7.3 Synthesis of the co-creation

To maintain the momentum of the co-creation session and establish an iterative synthesis, a structured analysis approach was developed. This method was strategically designed to incorporate a continuous feedback loop, actively involving employees to optimise the validity of the findings. The immediate outcome of the co-creation session yielded a raw dataset consisting of a session transcript, initial thematic clusters, and 50 individual ideas. The generative synthesis of this data serves a dual purpose: it transforms the fragmented and incoherent raw output into analytically grounded concept directions that begin to answer Research Question 3 (RQ3), while simultaneously ensuring that those directions remain directly validated by the end-users whose experience generated them. Without this synthesis layer, the co-creation output would remain a data dump — a collection of post-its rather than a strategic foundation for ideation. The five-step process described in Sections 7.3.1 through 7.3.5 documents how that transformation was achieved.

7.3.1 Data Analysis & Multi-Stage Clustering

The immediate output of the session consisted of a transcript, the initial thematic clusters formed during the session, and 50 individual ideas distributed across the five HMW prompts. Because the initial clustering was conducted under time pressure during the session itself, a secondary analytical pass was performed after the session to establish a more robust thematic foundation. This secondary analysis involved re-clustering the ideas independently of the session's time constraints, allowing patterns to emerge from the content of the ideas rather than from the speed at which they had been grouped. This step is consistent with the methodological stance established in Section 3.3.1: that analytical rigour requires a structured process, not only the raw data that process produces.

7.3.2 Pillar formation

The re-clustered ideas were then reordered against the original five HMW prompts to assess what patterns and directions had been generated per requirement. This step served two purposes: it allowed the HMW framing to be refined in response to what the co-creation had surfaced, and it produced a set of 'idea pillars' — each representing a discrete functional direction for the system that mapped to a specific requirement while incorporating the nuance of employee-generated input.

7.3.2

For example, the ideas generated in response to HMW 5 (Concrete Suggestions) converged not simply on the provision of resources, but on the specific experience of not knowing what was possible — a finding that aligned directly with the Blank Page Problem documented in Section 5.2.3. The pillar derived from this prompt was therefore framed as 'Resource Discovery': its function was not only to list training options but to actively eliminate the experience of confronting an undefined possibility space [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources]. This kind of pillar-level synthesis — moving from surface-level ideas to the underlying need they expressed — ensured that the ideation output was not a feature list but a set of functional directions grounded in the behavioural diagnosis of Chapter 5.

7.3.3 AI-Assisted Idea generation

To manage the volume of raw data without losing participant intent, AI-assisted synthesis (Gemini) was employed to distil the content of each pillar into three to five overarching idea directions. This was not a replacement for analytical judgment; each AI-generated synthesis was reviewed, adjusted, and reformulated against the session transcript and the clusters identified in Section 7.3.1 to ensure it accurately reflected the intent expressed by participants rather than a generalised interpretation of the prompt. The role of AI here was to accelerate the synthesis of high-volume data within the 100-day project timeline — a deliberate and transparent methodological choice.

7.3.4 Member-Check Validation

Given that the synthesis described in Sections 7.3.1 through 7.3.3 was conducted by the researcher alone after the session, there was a structural risk of interpretive drift — the possibility that the synthesis had moved away from what participants actually intended. To address this, a ten-minute member-check was conducted via Miro, in which each synthesised idea was presented to the co-creation participants for evaluation using a good/bad/add tagging system, with the option to include explanatory comments. This step served both a validity function — confirming that the synthesis accurately captured participant intent — and a practical filtering function, as participants identified which ideas would genuinely be viable within the high-pressure operational environment of Essense.

7.3.4

The bulk of the synthesised ideas were validated. A subset was either discarded — primarily ideas that duplicated functionality already present in existing tools or that addressed only a partial dimension of a barrier — or combined with adjacent ideas to form more complete responses to the relevant requirement. This filtering is consistent with the Opportunity-level diagnosis of Chapter 5: ideas that would have added to the system's administrative footprint without meaningfully reducing cognitive friction were identified by participants themselves as counterproductive[Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

7.3.5 Scope & Alignment Screening

Following the member-check, a final screening pass was applied to ensure that the remaining ideas were within the project scope and would collectively answer the research questions. Ideas that overlapped with out-of-scope areas — specifically the feedback mechanism and the coaching system, both of which are addressed by separate organisational initiatives — were removed. Additionally, ideas that addressed only a partial dimension of a requirement were either combined with complementary ideas or discarded, ensuring that each pillar was adequately addressed by the final set of validated ideas entering the concept-finding stage.

The output of this five-step synthesis process was a set of scope-aligned, member-validated idea directions, each traceable to a specific requirement and grounded in the behavioural diagnosis of Chapter 5. This constitutes the validated input for the concept-finding stage described in Sections 7.4 and 7.5.

7.4 clustering & finding of concepts

To identify overarching concept themes across the validated ideas, a new clustering pass was performed independently of the pillar structure. The pillar structure had organised ideas by function — that is, by which requirement they addressed. The objective of this clustering stage was different: to identify thematic patterns that cut across multiple pillars, so that the emerging concept directions would each represent a coherent and internally consistent approach to the system as a whole, rather than a collection of functionally isolated features.

To prevent the clustering from simply reproducing the pillar structure, each pillar was assigned a distinct colour, ensuring that clusters drawn in this stage could not map directly onto a single requirement. This made cross-pillar clustering inevitable and allowed genuinely integrative themes to emerge. The clustering was performed three times independently to test the robustness of emerging themes, with the aim of identifying two to three distinct concept directions viable for comparative evaluation in Chapter 8.

The process produced eight initial clusters, which were subsequently evaluated for convergence and distinction prior to concept selection.

7.5 selection and description of concepts

7.5.1 Selection Criteria

To reduce eight clusters to two or three viable concept directions for Harris profile evaluation, three selection criteria were applied:

Criterion 1 — Requirement coverage: Each concept direction must address the full set of five design requirements, either directly or in combination with another feature it contains. Concept configurations addressing merely a subset of the established requirements were systematically excluded as standalone options.

Criterion 2 — Conceptual distinction: The selected concept directions must be sufficiently distinct from one another that a meaningful comparative evaluation is possible. Directions that converged on the same underlying logic — even if they differed in format — were merged prior to the Harris profile.

Criterion 3 — Internal consistency: The ideas within each concept direction must not contradict one another. For example, a concept combining high standardisation with high autonomy would create a structural tension that could not be resolved through design alone and was therefore not viable as a coherent direction.

Applying these three criteria to the eight clusters produced three concept directions, each of which is described below.

CONCEPT 01

social



"grow together"

The first concept is framed around a Collaborative Learning Environment (CLE). Rather than positioning personal development as an individual task to be managed in isolation, this direction shifts PD into a community-of-practice model, leveraging social capital to reduce the psychological threshold for reflection and failure. The underlying logic is that shared accountability and visible peer learning lower the perceived cost of engagement — working on development together feels less effortful than working on it alone [Social Opportunity – Social Influences; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement]. The concept addresses the Sugarcoated Feedback Loop identified in Section 5.2.3 by creating structured social contexts in which constructive peer input is normalised rather than exceptional [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

- community
- peer learning
- social norms

CONCEPT 02

effortless



"grow without trying"

The second concept is rooted in Human-Centred Automation (HCA), applying principles of behavioural nudge design to minimise the cognitive load associated with PD engagement. The core logic of this direction is that the primary barrier to personal development at Essense is not a deficit in motivation or willingness, but in the environmental conditions required for System 2 tasks to occur — specifically, the absence of protected time and the high cognitive friction of initiating PD under workload pressure (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 2). This concept responds to that diagnosis directly: by automating administrative tasks, embedding developmental micro-prompts into existing daily workflows, and reducing the entry cost of every PD interaction, it converts effortful System 2 tasks into frictionless System 1 habits [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation]. The concept is optimised for the To-Do Fatigue problem: its central value proposition is that personal development should happen alongside existing work, not on top of it.

- automation
- micro-tasks
- low friction

CONCEPT 03

guided



"grow with support"

The third concept is framed as a modular autonomy system. It provides a structured architecture for self-regulated learning — a clear roadmap with predefined options that employees can select, sequence, and adapt according to their own ambitions and role requirements. The underlying logic is that the Blank Page Problem (Section 5.2.3, Barrier 1) is a structural problem, not a motivational one: employees do not lack the desire to develop, but the scaffolding needed to translate that desire into a concrete starting point. By offering a 'menu' of pre-defined development options within a clear career framework, this concept eliminates the experience of confronting an undefined possibility space while preserving the employee's agency over which options they choose and in what sequence [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

- roadmap
- autonomy
- menu-driven

Synthesis: From Possibility Space to Evaluation

The three concept directions produced through this chapter represent qualitatively distinct responses to the same underlying behavioural diagnosis. Concept 1 addresses the social and motivational dimension of the problem; Concept 2 addresses the environmental and cognitive load dimension; Concept 3 addresses the structural and capability dimension. Each direction draws on the validated ideas produced through the co-creation synthesis, is traceable to specific barriers identified in Chapter 5, and is framed against the five design requirements of Chapter 6. Critically, none of the three directions is a complete solution in isolation — each resolves some requirements more effectively than others, and each introduces tradeoffs that require empirical evaluation. This is the first moment in the project where competing, equally valid responses to the same diagnosis exist simultaneously — none of the three directions is wrong, and none is sufficient alone. The value of that divergence is precisely that it forces an empirical choice, grounded in the lived judgment of the employees who experience these barriers, rather than in researcher preference. The comparative assessment of these tradeoffs, conducted with Essense employees using a Harris profile, is the subject of Chapter 8.

Concept development and selection

8.1 concept detailing

8.2 Harris profile evaluation

8.3 Results

8.4 Conclusion: The favoured concept

08

Having established three analytically grounded and user-validated concept directions in Chapter 7, this chapter focuses on their detailed development and the selection of a single direction to carry forward into the prototype and validation phase. Section 8.1 develops the three directions into comparable evaluation artefacts; Section 8.2 documents the Harris profile method, participants, and criteria; Section 8.3 presents the quantitative scores and the qualitative discussion behind them; and Section 8.4 states the conclusion and the strategic rationale for the hybrid direction that emerges.

This step is crucial for two reasons. First, even though the three concept directions are grounded in the empirical data of Chapter 5, data alone cannot determine which direction is most viable in practice — that judgment requires the lived experience of the employees who will use the system. Second, a shared evaluation process removes the risk of researcher bias: at this stage of the project, immersion in the data creates a real risk that the direction that seems most compelling analytically is not the one that best resolves the barriers as employees experience them. The Harris profile is the methodological mechanism through which that bias is structurally addressed (Roozenburg & Eekels, 1995).

8.1 concept detailing

To facilitate a rigorous and fair comparison during the evaluation phase, the three concept directions were developed into structured visual design posters. The level of detail was deliberately calibrated: clear enough that participants could evaluate the logic, workflow, and distinctive focus of each concept with genuine understanding, but not so granular that the session would be consumed by clarification rather than assessment. Each poster followed a consistent structure covering the concept name and focus, the specific pain points it addresses, its key features, its value proposition, a user journey illustrating how it would function in practice, and a system architecture diagram showing how its features connect. This structural consistency ensured that participants were comparing concepts on equivalent dimensions rather than reacting to differences in presentation depth.

The manual content of each poster — the workflows, features, and architectural logic — was developed by hand on the basis of the validated ideas produced in Chapter 7. This content was subsequently processed using the generative AI tool Claude to synthesise and produce cohesive, professional presentation layouts. Given the 100-day project timeline, AI-assisted layout generation allowed the concepts to be presented with the visual clarity needed for genuine evaluation, without the time cost of a full manual design process. The intellectual content of each poster — the concept logic, the feature set, the design rationale — remained entirely researcher-authored; the AI function was layout and presentation only. The finalised posters can be found in Appendix F.

The three concepts were named and focused as follows:

- **Concept 1 — Developing Together:** focus on social connection, shared learning economy, and cultural change.
- **Concept 2 — The Seamless Digital Agent:** focus on automation, efficiency, and the unburdening of employees from administrative friction.
- **Concept 3 — The Guided Career Architect:** focus on structure, autonomy, and long-term developmental frameworks.

8.2 Harris profile evaluation

8.2.1 Method and Participant Selection

The Harris profile is a graphic representation of the strengths and weaknesses of design concepts with respect to predefined design requirements (Roozenburg & Eekels, 1995; Delft design guide, 2017). It makes evaluations explicit so that they can be discussed and interrogated rather than remaining implicit. The method is particularly appropriate at this stage of the project because it structures the evaluation around the design requirements established in Chapter 6 — ensuring that the selection decision is traceable back to the empirical findings of Chapter 5, rather than being driven by aesthetic preference or surface-level appeal.

The evaluation was conducted with three Essense employees of varying roles and seniority levels. This variation was deliberate: as established in Section 5.2.5, seniority is a significant variable in how employees experience the barriers to personal development, and an evaluation conducted solely with senior or junior participants would risk producing a skewed selection. Prior to scoring, participants received a structured introduction to the project context, a summary of the key barriers and enablers identified in the field research, and an explanation of the evaluation method and scoring scale. This foundation ensured that scores were grounded in an understanding of the problem space rather than in first impressions of the concept presentations.

Scores were weighted on a four-point scale (== = -2, = = -1, + = +1, ++ = +2), and criteria were ranked in order of importance, allowing the profile to be read as a tower — the direction in which the tower of blocks would fall indicating which concept carried the most critical risk (Roozenburg & Eekels, 1995; Delft design guide, 2017). Following the scoring, a 15-minute structured discussion was conducted to understand the reasoning behind individual scores and to surface qualitative insights that the numerical profile alone could not capture.

8.2.2 Evaluation Criteria

The eight criteria used in the Harris profile were derived directly from the research questions (Section 3.1) and the design requirements (Section 6.2), ensuring that the evaluation was anchored in the empirical foundation of the project rather than in researcher intuition. The criteria and their methodological justifications are as follows:

- 1. **System Synergy** — does the concept integrate seamlessly into existing tools and workflows without clashing? Maps directly to the main research question and to the non-negotiable system synergy constraint established in Section 5.1.2. Set as the highest-ranked criterion and treated as a dealbreaker.
- 2. **Continuous and Sustainable Flow** — does the concept enable active, continuous engagement rather than episodic compliance? Maps to Requirement 1 and to RQ3 [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].
- 3. **Goal Deconstruction** — does the concept effectively help employees break down yearly ambitions into manageable actions? Maps to Requirement 2 and directly addresses the Blank Page Problem [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].
- 4. **Guidance** — how effectively does the concept resolve the Blank Page Problem while preserving employee ownership? Maps to RQ1 and to the tension between structure and autonomy identified throughout Section 5.2 [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Reflective Motivation – Intentions].
- 5. **Autonomy** — does the concept preserve the employee's freedom to work on PD independently and on their own terms? Maps to RQ1 and to the core organisational value of employee ownership established in Section 5.1.4 [Reflective Motivation – Intentions].
- 6. **Effort and Administrative Friction Reduction** — does the concept lower the effort required to engage with PD, reducing the administrative burden? Maps to RQ2 and directly targets To-Do Fatigue [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].
- 7. **Business and Role Alignment** — how well does the concept align with Essense's business goals and role frameworks? Maps to RQ1 and to the organisational requirements established in Section 5.1 [TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity].
- 8. **Long-Term Engagement and Adaptivity** — is the concept flexible enough to adapt over time while establishing a self-sustaining developmental habit? Maps directly to RQ3 [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

8.3 Results

8.3.1 Score Overview

Applying the scoring matrix across all three participants, the accumulated concept scores were as follows:

- **Concept 1 — Developing Together: –10**
- **Concept 2 — Seamless Digital Agent: +10**
- **Concept 3 — Guided Career Architect: +10**

The visual profiles for all three concepts are presented in Figure 8 (next page), with the complete scoring data in Appendix G. Read at the criterion level, one pattern structures the remainder of this section: Concept 1 falls away on the operational criteria, while Concepts 2 and 3 reach the same total through fundamentally different score distributions.

8.3.2 The First Cut: Concept 1

From the total score it became clear that Concept 1 — Developing Together — would not advance to the next phase. While participants recognised genuine value in the concept's emphasis on psychological safety and shared learning, the discussion revealed that the operational feasibility of a socially-driven PD model within the specific environment of Essense was a fundamental concern. On the criteria of effort and administrative friction reduction and system synergy, the concept received consistently poor scores (–, ––).

The qualitative reasoning behind these scores was illuminating. Participants noted that the concept functions primarily as a motivational lever — working on development together creates social energy and lowers the psychological threshold for engagement — but that this motivational effect is not self-sustaining once the social moment has passed. The step beyond inspiration, namely the structured execution and ongoing tracking of development, had no adequate foundation within the concept's architecture. Furthermore, under the high-workload conditions that define Essense's operational reality, a system reliant on coordinated social engagement was identified as practically fragile: varying project allocations and development plans make consistent participation structurally difficult to guarantee [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources; Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

This conclusion aligns directly with the diagnostic finding of Section 5.2: the COM-B model requires that Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation are all sufficiently addressed for sustained behavioural change to occur. Concept 1 addresses the Motivation dimension effectively but leaves the Opportunity and Capability dimensions structurally underserved — a partial solution that cannot stand alone [Reflective Motivation – Reinforcement; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

8.3.3 The Two Winners: Concepts 2 and 3

Both the Concept 2: Seamless Digital Agent and Concept 3: Guided Career Architect converged at a score of +10, a tie. However, the rules for the Harris profile evaluation do not only take in the net scores, but also the consistency of scores. Besides, the discussion shed light to the why behind the scores which led to a definite decision:

Concept 2 — The Seamless Digital Agent demonstrated a stable and consistently positive profile with minimal negative deviation. Its strongest scores came on continuous and sustainable flow and effort and administrative friction reduction — which is consistent with its core design logic of background automation [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement]. The discussion surfaced one meaningful point of internal disagreement on the friction reduction criterion: while two participants felt that an automated agent would dramatically reduce the daily cognitive burden of PD engagement, a third expressed concern that a poorly calibrated agent could become a source of distraction rather than support — functioning as a nagging feature rather than a helpful one. Autonomy also emerged as a relative weakness: participants discussed the risk that a highly automated system might over-prescribe the development process, reducing the employee's sense of personal agency over their own growth path. This tension — between the structure needed to overcome the Blank Page Problem and the autonomy that makes PD feel personally meaningful — was identified in Section 5.2.2 as a recurring friction in the data, and it surfaces here as a live design challenge requiring careful resolution in the prototype phase [Reflective Motivation – Intentions; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

Concept 3 — The Guided Career Architect exhibited a high-risk, high-reward profile. It achieved strong scores on continuous and sustainable flow, guidance, goal deconstruction, and business and role alignment — demonstrating that its structured backbone effectively resolves the Blank Page Problem by providing a clear framework for what development should look like at each career level [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals; TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity]. Participants confirmed that having a predefined roadmap significantly reduced the experience of confronting an undefined starting point. However, the concept suffered notably on system synergy and autonomy. The qualitative discussion revealed a collective concern that a highly structured, top-down curriculum framework would clash with Essense's dynamic, fast-paced culture — a risk that maps directly to the architectural contradiction identified in Section 5.1.2, where the system must simultaneously support the agile Essense structure and the more robust Eidra framework [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context]. On autonomy specifically, all three participants noted that a strict role curriculum could easily feel deterministic and rigid, restricting the freedom to explore cross-disciplinary development paths that employees explicitly value (Section 5.2.7). Furthermore, the concept's nudging mechanism — intended to prompt developmental activity — was identified as likely to register as unwanted pressure rather than useful guidance in a high-workload environment, echoing the To-Do Fatigue dynamic documented in Section 5.2.3 [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Reflective Motivation – Intentions].

The discussion also surfaced a cross-concept insight relevant to both remaining concepts: participants emphasised that reflection grounded in positive psychology is an essential component of any effective PD system, and that the ability to develop self-knowledge through an ongoing overview of actions, feedback, and growth trajectories is what generates the fuel for the next developmental step. This finding reinforces Requirement 4 and directly informs the design of the reflection features in the prototype phase [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

8.3.4 Breaking the Tie

As established in Section 8.2.1, the profile is read as a tower (figure 8) : the direction in which it falls indicates which concept carries the most critical structural risk. With system synergy set as the dealbreaker criterion (Section 8.2.2), a concept that fails on this dimension cannot function within the organisational context regardless of how well it performs on all others.

When the tower is read through this lens, the distinction becomes decisive. All three participants rated Concept 3 very low on system synergy, indicating a structural risk that is not recoverable through design refinement alone — the concept's fundamental architecture is incompatible with the existing ecosystem. Concept 2, by contrast, landed on a neutral score for system synergy, reflecting a more manageable risk that can be addressed through careful implementation rather than indicating a structural contradiction. While Concept 3 offers a stronger structural outline, its system synergy deficit constitutes a dealbreaker under the evaluation criteria established at the outset. Concept 2 achieves the same accumulated score with substantially lower operational risk and higher integration potential.

8.4 Conclusion: The favoured concept

Concept 2 — the Seamless Digital Agent — is selected as the winning concept direction. However, the evaluation made clear that certain structural elements of Concept 3 remain valuable and should not be discarded: specifically, the micro-template and roadmap features that directly resolve the Blank Page Problem were validated as effective by participants, and their absence from Concept 2 was the primary source of its weaker guidance score.

The strategic conclusion is therefore not to implement Concept 2 in isolation, but to develop a hybrid that uses Concept 2 as its operational baseline — its automation logic, workflow integration, and friction-reduction architecture — while borrowing the high-guidance structural elements of Concept 3 to ensure the Blank Page Problem is safely resolved. This hybrid ensures that all three COM-B pillars are adequately addressed: the automation architecture lowers cognitive load and environmental friction, directly resolving the Opportunity deficit identified as the root cause in Section 5.2 [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context]; the reduction in administrative friction removes the To-Do Fatigue dynamic that crowds out PD under workload pressure [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement]; and the structural scaffolding borrowed from Concept 3 provides the Capability support needed for employees who cannot yet construct their own development framework [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals]. A system that addresses all three pillars simultaneously is, as established in the diagnostic conclusion of Section 5.2, the minimum requirement for sustained behavioural change.

The following chapter translates this hybrid concept direction into a testable prototype, iterating the design toward a validated final system.

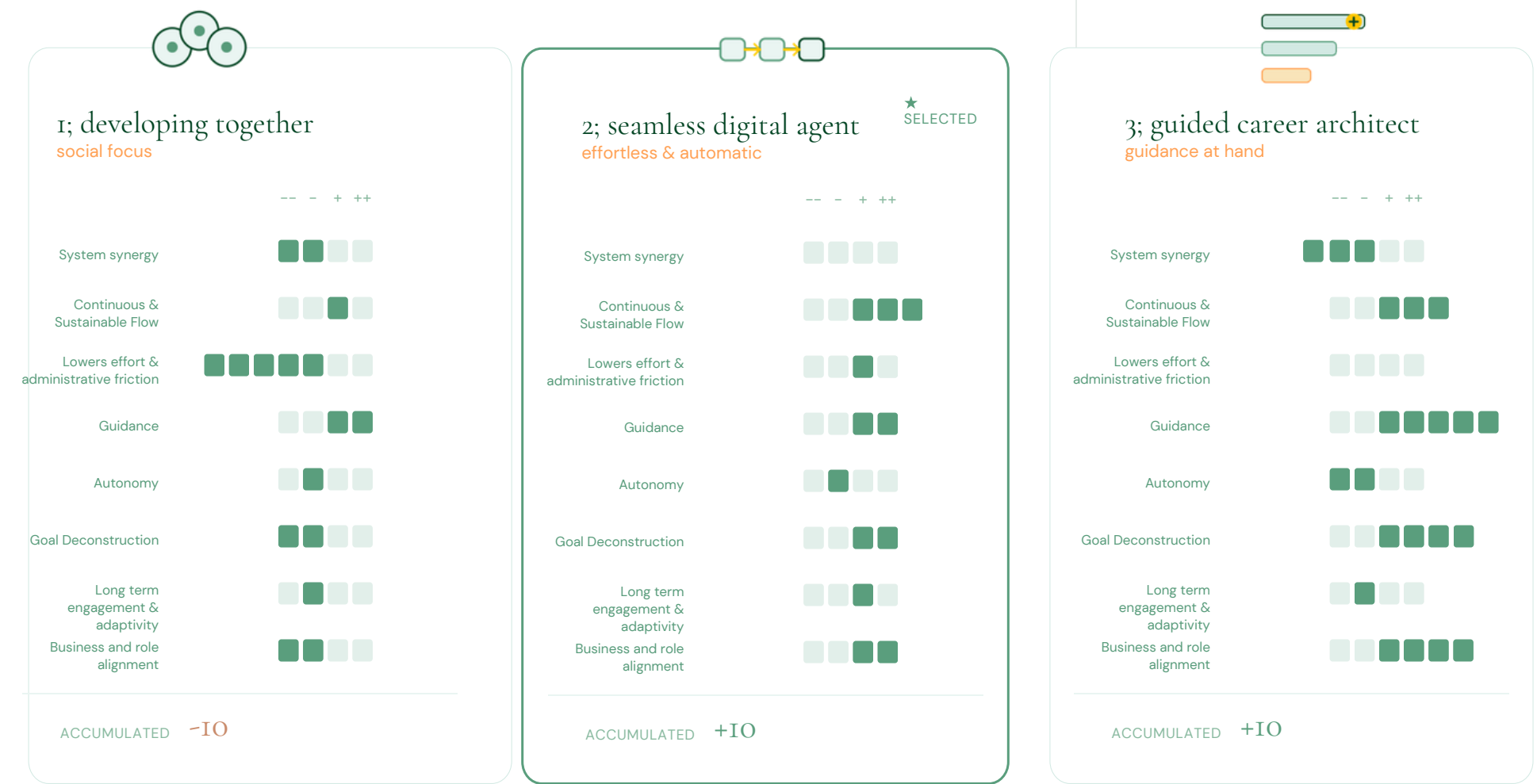


Figure 8: visual profiles for all three concepts

iteration design & Validation

9.1 From Selection to Refinement

9.2 Functional Specification (The "What")

9.3 Prototyping Process (The "How")

9.4 User testing setup

9.5 Final Iteration

09

Having selected the hybrid concept direction through the Harris profile evaluation in Chapter 8, this chapter documents the translation of that direction into a testable prototype and the subsequent validation of that prototype with Essense employees and company representatives. The chapter moves through four stages. Section 9.1 documents how the Harris profile feedback was integrated into a refined concept baseline. Section 9.2 specifies the functional architecture of the system — what it does and why each feature exists in relation to the design requirements. Section 9.3 describes the prototyping process — how the system was built, what tools were used, and what fidelity decisions were made. Section 9.4 documents the user testing and company validation setup, method, and findings. Section 9.5 describes the final iteration made on the basis of those findings before handover.

This chapter completes the Develop phase of the Double Diamond. The objective is not to produce a finished product but to produce a sufficiently developed and empirically validated system that can be handed over to Essense as a functioning, sustainable deliverable — one that is traceable at every point back to the behavioural diagnosis of Chapter 5 and the requirements of Chapter 6.

9.1 From Selection to Refinement

The Harris profile evaluation (Chapter 8) produced a clear strategic direction: Concept 2 — the Seamless Digital Agent — serves as the operational baseline, supplemented by the high-guidance structural elements of Concept 3 that were validated as effective in resolving the Blank Page Problem. This hybrid logic is not a compromise between two directions; it is a deliberate architectural decision grounded in the COM-B diagnostic conclusion of Section 5.2. Concept 2 addresses the Opportunity and Automatic Motivation deficit — the root cause of PD failure at Essense — through automation and workflow integration. Concept 3 contributes the Capability scaffolding needed to resolve the Blank Page Problem for employees who cannot yet structure their own development trajectory. Together, they ensure that all three COM-B pillars are addressed within a single coherent system [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].

Two specific refinements emerged directly from the Harris profile discussion. First, the autonomy weakness identified in Concept 2 — the risk that over-automation reduces the employee's sense of personal agency — was resolved architecturally by designing the system as an opt-in support structure rather than a mandatory workflow. Every feature can be used independently; more interventionist options such as Calendar Sanctity can be switched off entirely. The system is designed to be present and available, not to impose itself. Second, the concern raised about the nudging mechanism becoming a nagging distraction was addressed by ensuring that all prompts are triggered by user action rather than by time-based automation alone — the system responds to what the employee does, rather than pushing reminders into their workflow uninvited [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Reflective Motivation – Intentions].

The core design rationale of the refined system is therefore as follows: to reduce the cognitive barrier to PD engagement sufficiently that routine tracking can be absorbed into System 1 interactions, while preserving System 2 cognitive capacity for the genuinely developmental tasks — reflection, goal-setting, and ambition deconstruction — that require it (Section 4.3.3). The system does not ask employees to do more; it restructures what they already need to do so that it costs less.

To optimise system synergy — identified as the non-negotiable dealbreaker criterion in the Harris evaluation — the refined concept is embedded directly into the existing digital tool ecosystem of Essense and Eidra, operating across three core platforms: Notion, Google Calendar, and Claude AI. The strategic role of each platform is described in Section 9.2.1.

9.2 Functional Specification (The "What")

9.2.1 System compliance and Platform architecture

To comply with the system synergy constraint established in Section 5.1.2 and confirmed as a dealbreaker in the Harris evaluation (Chapter 8), the system does not operate as a standalone platform. Instead, it is built directly into the existing digital tool ecosystem of Essense and Eidra, operating seamlessly across three core environments:

- **Notion** functions as the Single Source of Truth (SSOT) for the entire system. Every feature of the personal development system lives within Notion — the central hub, the goal tracking, the reflection formats, the training menu, the coach dashboard, and the feedback insights tool. Nothing requires the employee to navigate outside this environment to engage with their development [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].
- **Google Calendar** fulfils the requirement for time sanctity automation by programmatically reserving personal development time blocks, ensuring that PD time is structurally protected from project workload rather than left to individual initiative — directly addressing the temporal gap identified in Section 5.2.3 [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].
- **Claude AI** functions as the connective intelligence layer of the system. It links Notion and Google Calendar, enables the AI-driven features within the system, and — critically — provides the adaptive capacity that ensures the system can evolve alongside the organisation over time, even in the absence of its original designer. This last point is not incidental: as established in Section 12.1, the previous PD playbook at Essense became obsolete precisely because it was static. Claude's architecture prevents this decay by enabling the system to be updated and extended by internal administrators using the prompt and installation guide provided at handover.

The full platform architecture — including Vercel as the deployment layer hosting the interactive Claude-built components embedded into Notion, and GitHub as the version control and source repository — is visualised in Figure 9, alongside the role each platform plays within the system as a whole.

9.2.2 System Architecture & Information Architecture (IA)

The system architecture is designed to minimise the effort required from the employee at the point of use. The foundational input — yearly goals and role information — is entered once per year, after which the system syncs this data to the centralised Notion backend and adjusts all features accordingly. This one-time input model is a direct design response to the Administrative Burden identified in Section 5.2.3: by front-loading the data entry into a single annual moment, the system eliminates the ongoing effort of maintaining records manually [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

The information architecture organises, structures, and labels all content so that employees can find what they need, understand their context, and complete tasks with minimal cognitive effort. It is designed to work in conjunction with the existing Career Development Framework and SMART model parameters already in use within Essense and Eidra, ensuring continuity rather than duplication [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

From interactions with the system, progress is tracked and dashboards are updated automatically — without requiring manual data entry from the employee. The system is adjustable to the individual: ambition levels can be set by the user and multiple reflection formats are available. All features can be used independently, and the system is designed as a supporting tool rather than an additional obligation [Reflective Motivation – Intentions; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].



Figure 9 — Platform architecture and ecosystem roles of the made system. The system operates across five interconnected platforms: Notion functions as the single source of truth, housing all features and employee-facing content; Claude AI acts as the connective intelligence layer, linking platforms and enabling adaptive capacity; Google Calendar provides structural time sanctity through programmatic reservation of personal development blocks; Vercel hosts the interactive Claude-built components embedded into Notion as iFrames; and GitHub maintains version control. All five converge in the system — an AI-mediated personal development environment built entirely into the tools Essense already uses.

9.2.3 Core System Features

The following sections describe each of the eight core features of the system. Each feature is linked explicitly to the design requirement it addresses and to the behavioural barrier it is designed to resolve. Screenshots of the prototype are presented as annotated figures throughout.

It should be noted that the features described in this section reflect the prototype as it existed at the point of testing — the pre-iteration state that participants interacted with during the user tests documented in Section 9.4. Several architectural and feature-level changes were made on the basis of those findings; the specific adjustments and their rationale are documented in full in Section 9.5, and the final iterated system is presented in Chapter 10.

PLATFORM ROLES

- Notion · SSOT**
Every feature lives here. Hub, goals, reflection, training, coach dashboard, insights.
- Claude AI · connective intelligence**
Links Notion + Calendar. Enables AI features. Adaptive — updated by admins via prompt.
- Google Calendar · time sanctity**
Programmatically reserves Sacred Time Blocks. Requires one-time OAuth approval.
- Vercel · deployment**
Hosts interactive Claude-built components. Embedded in Notion as iFrames for rich UI.
- GitHub · version control**
Source repository for all components

One-time annual input (goals + role) → Claude syncs to Notion backend → all 8 features update automatically.

9.2.3.1. The Central PD Backbone - Notion SSOT

[Requirement 1 — Continuous, Sustainable Activity | Requirement 3 — Active Tracking]

The fragmentation identified in Section 5.2.2 — a scattered set of tools and guidelines with no connective logic — means employees currently have no single environment in which their development can be initiated, tracked, and reviewed. The central landing page within Notion resolves this directly: it functions as the employee's PD home, the one coherent environment that replaces the scatter [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

The page opens with an explicit statement of why continuous personal development matters, grounding the system's purpose before the employee engages with any feature. It presents a personal profile displaying name, role, level, coach, and start date — all populated from the Notion database — and introduces the 'Growth at a Glance' dashboard: a visual overview of time spent on PD, planned actions and coaching sessions, and a goal roadmap presented in Gantt chart format, mapped against the Delivery, People, and Added Value pillars of the career framework. This dashboard gives the employee a full developmental overview in a single interaction, directly countering the absence of ongoing overview identified as a root cause of uninformed goal-setting in Section 5.2.3 [Memory, Attention and Decision Processes; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

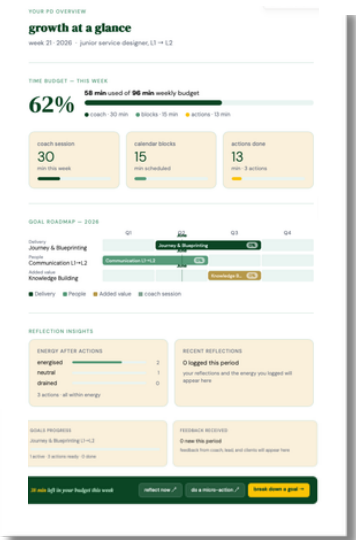
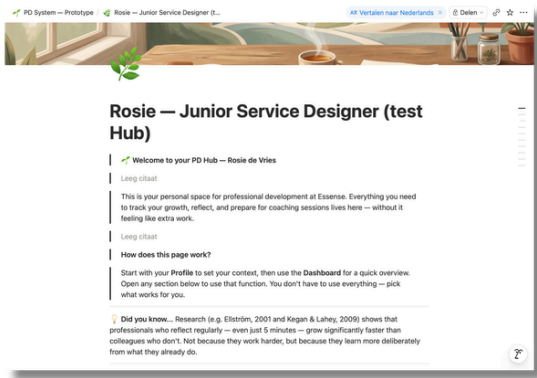


Figure 10 — Central PD Hub landing page and Growth at a Glance dashboard. The dashboard consolidates time budget, goal roadmap, reflection insights, and feedback status into a single view, eliminating the need to navigate multiple tools to understand developmental progress.

9.2.3.2 Goal Deconstruction

[Requirement 2 — Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions | Requirement 3 — Active Tracking]

The goal deconstruction feature provides the structural scaffolding that directly resolves the Blank Page Problem identified in Section 5.2.3, Barrier 1: the inability to translate broad, annual YER ambitions into concrete, actionable steps that can be pursued within the operational rhythm of daily work [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals]. In the prototype, goals are pre-populated on the basis of the user's current role and level as drawn from the career development framework — simulating the state the system would be in following a real onboarding and goal-setting moment. This approach was chosen deliberately for the user testing phase: by providing realistic, role-appropriate goals from the outset, the test could focus on evaluating the system's core features and interaction logic rather than on the goal-entry process itself. Participants could additionally add their own goals during the session if desired. In the live system, goals are entered by the employee — with a direct import from the employee's Miro YER board available as a future integration once the system is fully launched.

The feature operates through two distinct functions. The first is the goal overview: a structured display of all active and completed goals for the year, each linked explicitly to its corresponding Essence career pillar — Delivery, People, or Added Value. This linkage resolves a specific friction identified in Section 5.2.4: employees experience PD as only valid when it has direct utility in their work role, and the absence of a visible connection between personal goals and the career framework reinforces this narrowing. By making the connection structural and immediately visible, the system broadens the perceived legitimacy of development directions without requiring the employee to construct the justification themselves [TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity; Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences]. The overview also displays completion status per goal, providing the ongoing developmental overview that was identified as entirely absent in the current system (Section 5.2.3) [Memory, Attention and Decision Processes; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

The second function is the goal breakdown tool: a dedicated interaction for splitting a broad yearly goal into three to five concrete sub-goals that can realistically be pursued within a month or quarter. This tool directly targets the seniority gap identified in Section 5.2.3 — the finding that the capacity to deconstruct abstract ambitions into actionable steps correlates with seniority and is entirely unscaffolded for junior employees in the current system. The breakdown tool operationalises the seniority capital of senior employees as a structural feature available to everyone, regardless of experience level [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals; Knowledge]. Each generated sub-goal is structured according to the SMART model and the Eidra career framework, presented with a rationale, an estimated timeframe, and a suggested starting resource. The employee reviews, approves, modifies, or discards each suggestion before any are added to the active goal overview — preserving agency over the development direction while eliminating the open-ended cognitive labour of constructing that structure from scratch [Reflective Motivation – Intentions]. Direct links to the Eidra GROW and SMART frameworks and career development documentation are provided throughout, ensuring no ambiguity exists about the standards against which goals are set [Psychological Capability – Knowledge].

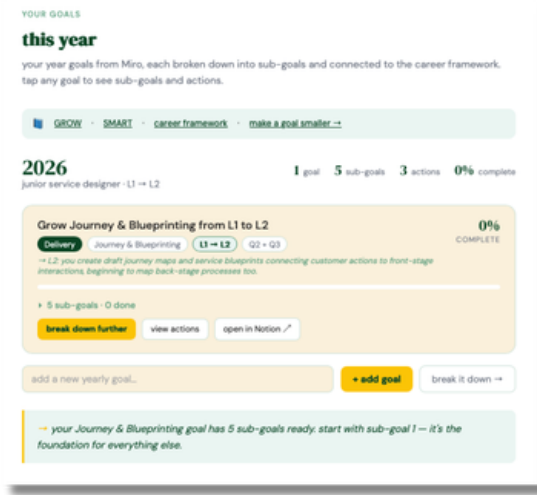


Figure 11 — Goal overview screen showing active and completed goals mapped to Essence career pillars, with completion status tracked per goal

Each generated sub-goal is structured according to the SMART model and the Eidra career framework, presented with a rationale, an estimated timeframe, and a suggested starting resource. The employee reviews, approves, modifies, or discards each suggestion before any are added to the active goal overview — preserving agency over the development direction while eliminating the open-ended cognitive labour of constructing that structure from scratch [Reflective Motivation – Intentions]. Direct links to the Eidra GROW and SMART frameworks and career development documentation are provided throughout, ensuring no ambiguity exists about the standards against which goals are set [Psychological Capability – Knowledge].

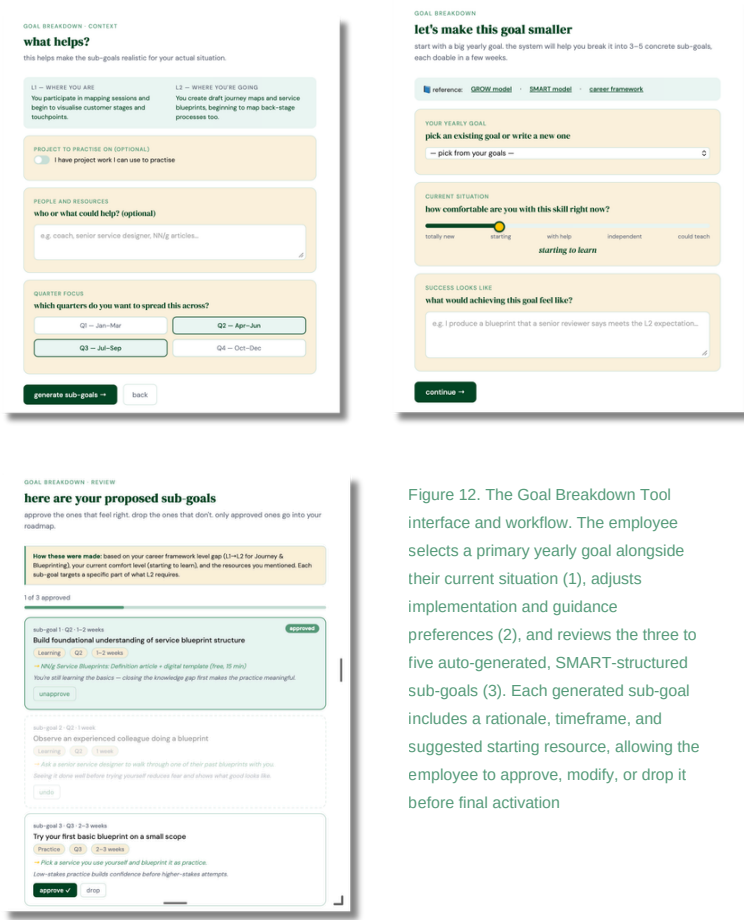


Figure 12. The Goal Breakdown Tool interface and workflow. The employee selects a primary yearly goal alongside their current situation (1), adjusts implementation and guidance preferences (2), and reviews the three to five auto-generated, SMART-structured sub-goals (3). Each generated sub-goal includes a rationale, timeframe, and suggested starting resource, allowing the employee to approve, modify, or drop it before final activation

9.2.3.3 Profile and Time Sanctity Automation

[Requirement 1 — Continuous, Sustainable Activity]

The profile page makes the hub visibly and immediately the employee's own: name, role, level, coach, and start date are displayed alongside a yearly progress overview showing how far they have come toward their active goals. This personalisation is not decorative — it activates the sense of ownership identified in Section 5.2.6 as one of the key empirical enablers of sustained personal development, and grounds the system in individual identity before any feature is used [Reflective Motivation – Intentions].

The most critical function this section provides is structural prioritisation. Personal development is consistently deprioritised under high workload not because employees choose to discard it, but because it holds no protected place in the week — it is discretionary, and discretionary activities lose to deadlines. The Calendar Sanctity automation resolves this by connecting to Google Calendar and reserving recurring 'Sacred Time Blocks' for personal development in advance, without requiring any administrative effort from the employee. The block is simply there. By giving PD a fixed, pre-planned place in the calendar — one that carries the same structural weight as a client meeting — the system elevates it from something employees intend to do to something that is already planned. It cannot be easily discarded because it is no longer competing with client work for a space that does not yet exist [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

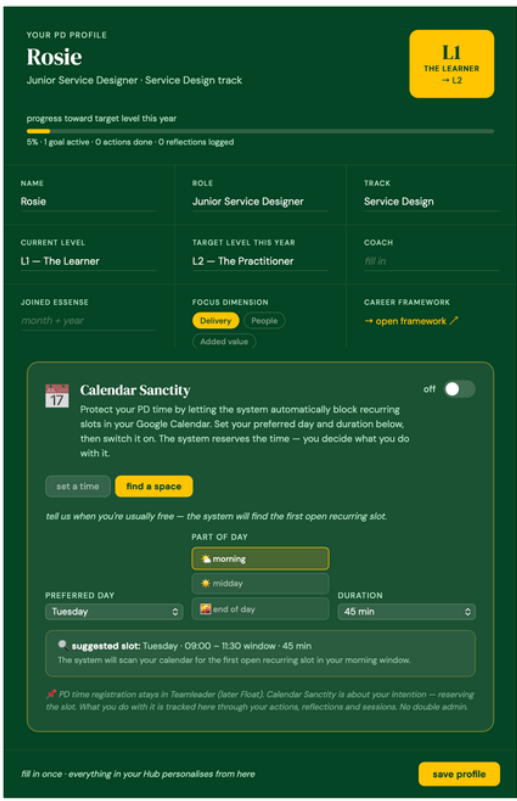


Figure 13 — PD Profile page including Calendar Sanctity toggle. The toggle allows employees to activate automated calendar blocking; preferred day and duration are set once and maintained automatically.

9.2.3.4. Dynamic Reflection Formats

[Requirement 4 — Active reflection]

To make reflection genuinely accessible rather than a compliance-driven text form, the system introduces six varied reflection formats, each designed for a different cognitive state, available time window, and preferred mode of engagement. The variety of formats is a direct design response to the finding in Section 5.2.3 that reflection is an effortful System 2 task: by offering formats that range from a two-question, three-minute quick check-in to a fully adaptive AI-guided conversation, the system meets employees at their current cognitive capacity rather than demanding a fixed level of effort regardless of context [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

All formats are grounded in positive psychology — framing reflection around energy gains, successes, and growth opportunities rather than failures and deficits. This is consistent with the desire expressed in the Harris profile discussion (Section 8.3.3) for reflection to be reframed as a possibility for growth rather than a representation of shortcoming, and with the broader psychological safety literature established in Section 4.1 [Automatic Motivation – Emotion; Reflective Motivation – Optimism].

Completed reflections are automatically stored in the system's database and fed back into the Growth at a Glance (section 9.2.3.1) and insights dashboard (section 9.2.3.7), contributing to the ongoing developmental overview without requiring any additional data entry from the employee.

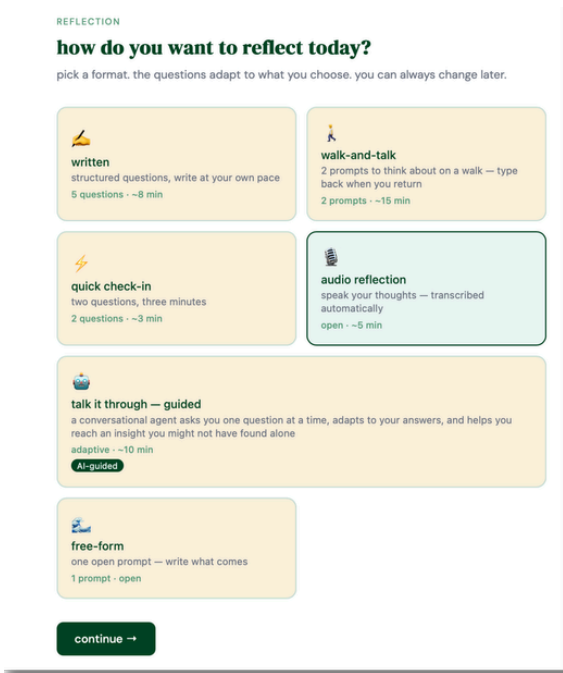


Figure 14 — Reflection format selection screen. Six formats are available: written, walk-and-talk, quick check-in, audio reflection, AI-guided conversation, and free-form. Each displays estimated time and prompt count, enabling employees to select the format that fits their available cognitive space.

9.2.3.5. Curated Training Menu & Peer Experience Logs

[Requirement 5 — Concrete Suggestions and Examples]

The curated training menu provides a searchable database of educational resources — articles, podcasts, webinars, courses, and tools — tagged to specific career framework competencies. This feature directly resolves the entry barrier described in Section 5.2.7: employees do not know what development is possible, and the absence of examples is a primary contributor to the Blank Page Problem. By providing a curated 'menu' of options, the system converts an undefined possibility space into a bounded, navigable one [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

The menu operates in two modes. In smart suggestion mode, the employee selects a goal and the AI searches both the curated database and the live internet for applicable resources, presenting the most relevant options. In browse mode, the full menu is searchable by topic, provider, competence, source type, and duration. Resources are tagged as free or budget-approved, directly addressing the approval friction identified in Section 5.2.5 [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context]. Selected resources can be added to the employee's roadmap and scheduled automatically.

This prototype demonstrates the theoretical workflow of the system but lacks data persistence and live execution. Elevating it to a functional production stage requires two primary technical implementations: linking the frontend to a dedicated backend database and configuring the Chrome browser integration.

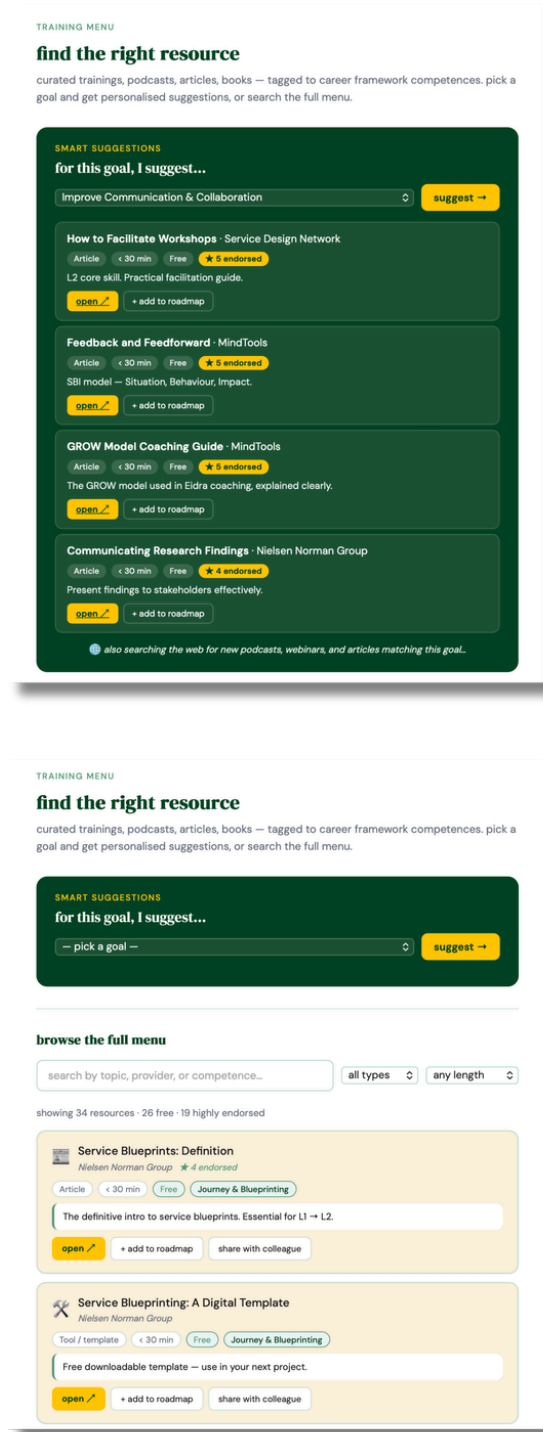


Figure 15 — Training menu in smart suggestion mode. Resources are ranked by peer endorsement count, tagged by competence and source type, and linked directly to the original source. The AI simultaneously searches the live internet for new resources matching the selected goal.

9.2.3.6 Coach Dashboard

[Requirement 1 — Continuous, Sustainable Activity | Requirement 4 — Active Reflection]

The coach feature supports the coaching structure being introduced within Essence by providing both the coachee and the coach with a structured, data-informed preparation environment. This feature addresses the desire for structured accountability within the coaching process identified in Section 5.2.7, and resolves the asymmetry of information that currently characterises coaching sessions — where the coach has no overview of the coachee's development between sessions [Social Opportunity – Social Influences; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

For the coachee, the system auto-generates a session preparation overview drawn from development activity since the previous session: active goals and their status, completed micro-actions, logged reflections, and received feedback. The coachee can select topics for discussion, add personal thoughts before the session, and share the overview with their coach directly. For the coach, a dedicated dashboard displays the development progress of all coachees — reflections completed, active goals, energy status, and upcoming sessions — enabling the coach to arrive at each session with full context rather than relying on the coachee's recall.

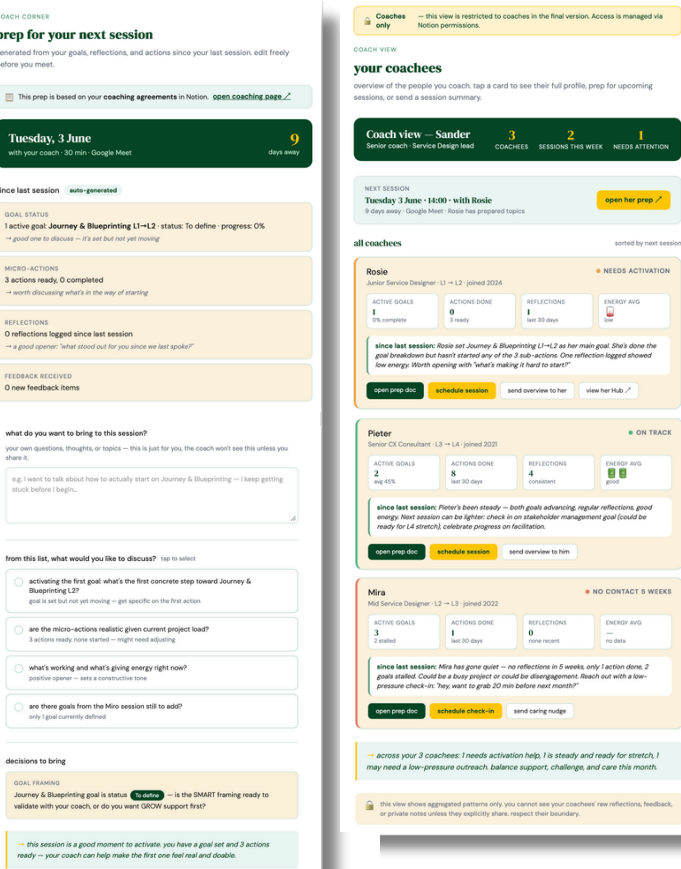


Figure16 — Coach dashboard overview from both coachee (left) and coach (right)

9.2.3.7 Feedback & reflection insight tool

[Requirement 4 — Active Reflection | Requirement 3 — Active Tracking]

The feedback insight tool provides a centralised repository for all feedback received — from coaches, leads, and clients — alongside the employee's accumulated reflection data. This directly addresses the Sugarcoated Feedback Loop identified in Section 5.2.3: by creating a structured, permanent record of all feedback received, the system prevents valuable constructive input from being lost or forgotten in the informality of verbal exchange [Social Opportunity – Social Influences; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes]. The tool synthesises feedback and reflection data into a longitudinal insight overview — identifying consistent strengths, recurring growth areas, and suggested next steps. These insights can be converted directly into new goals through the goal deconstruction feature, closing the loop between reflection and action. The continuous synthesis of feedback and reflection across the year transforms fragmented input into an adaptive, self-guided growth loop that eliminates the dependency on annual review moments as the only points of developmental stocktaking [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences].

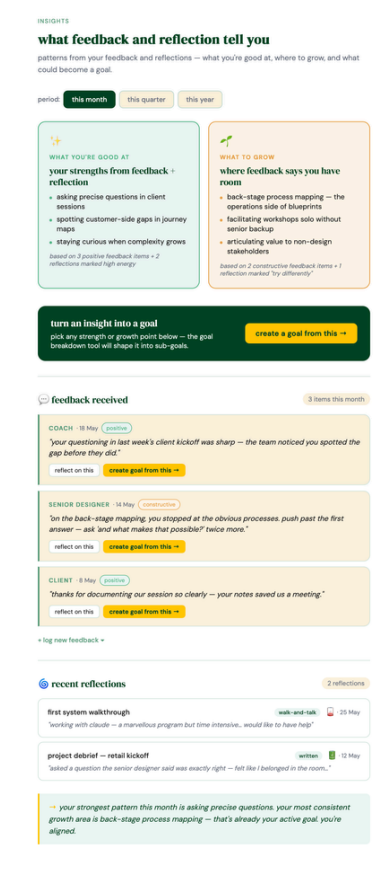


Figure 17 — Feedback and reflection insight screen. The left panel surfaces consistent strengths derived from feedback and reflections; the right panel identifies growth areas. Both panels link directly to the goal deconstruction tool.

9.2.3.8 Micro actions

[Requirement 1 — Continuous, Sustainable Activity | Requirement 2 — Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions]

As established in the Harris profile evaluation (Chapter 8), the micro-actions feature is borrowed from Concept 3 to permanently resolve the Blank Page Problem at the level of daily execution. Where the goal deconstruction feature (Section 9.2.3.2) breaks annual ambitions into quarterly sub-goals, the micro-actions feature breaks those sub-goals into explicit, bite-sized daily tasks — each taking approximately 15 minutes and directly linked to a specific career framework competency [Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].

The critical design logic of this feature is what the system calls 'stealth tracking': every micro-action that is ticked as complete automatically updates the time budget overview and the Growth at a Glance dashboard, without requiring any separate logging. The employee completes the action, marks it done, and the system records it — converting a System 2 administrative task into a System 1 interaction that takes seconds [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation]. This directly counters the Administrative Burden identified in Section 5.2.3 as one of the primary drivers of To-Do Fatigue.

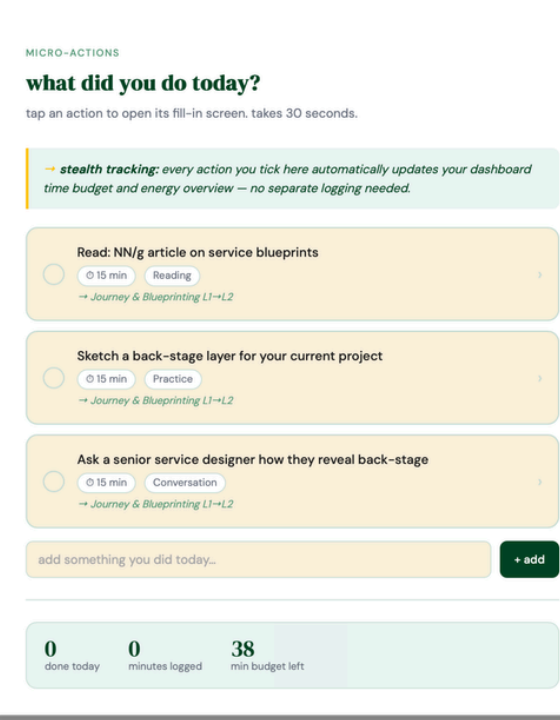


Figure 18 — Micro-actions screen showing three active tasks linked to the Journey and Blueprinting L1 → L2 goal. Each action displays estimated time, action type, and goal link. The stealth tracking note confirms that completing an action automatically updates the dashboard.

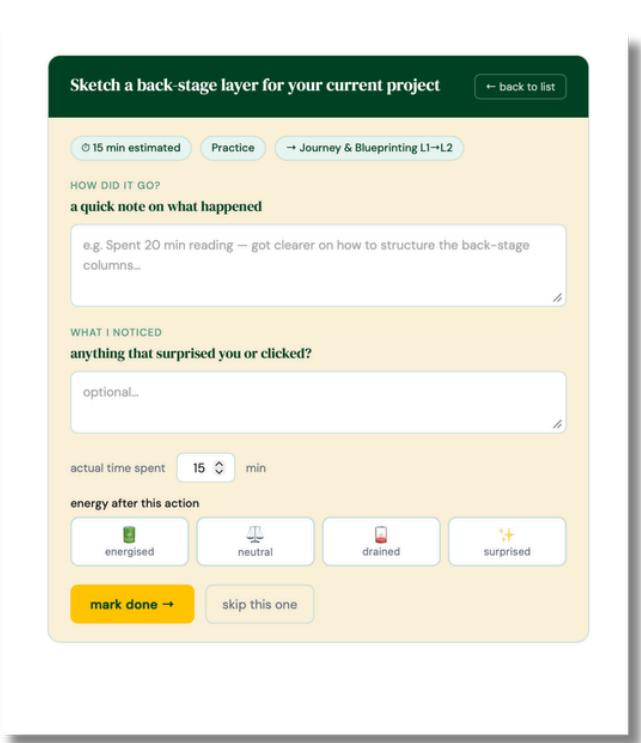


Figure 19 — Micro-action completion screen. The employee adds a brief note on what happened, logs energy after the action, and marks it done. The entire interaction is designed to take under 60 seconds.

9.3 Prototyping Process (The "How")

9.3.1 System Setup: Creating Synergy and Enabling Sustainability

The strategic choice to build the system on Claude AI was made on two grounds, both traceable to the research findings. First, Claude's connector architecture enables direct integration with Notion, Google Calendar, and Chrome — the platforms already in use within Essense and Eidra — providing a level of system synergy that a standalone tool or manual Notion build could not achieve. Second, and more fundamentally, Claude enables the adaptive capacity that makes true long-term sustainability possible: the system can be updated, extended, and reconfigured by internal administrators using the prompt and installation guide provided at handover, even in the absence of the original designer. This directly addresses the failure mode of the previous PD playbook at Essense, which became obsolete over time precisely because its static architecture could not evolve alongside the organisation.

It should be acknowledged that Claude AI was not within the researcher's prior area of expertise. To develop the foundational knowledge required to work with the system effectively, a series of structured learning sessions was undertaken with an acquaintance specialising in Claude implementation within organisational contexts, who has successfully embedded Claude into the systems of multiple companies (L. Markus, personal communication, 2026). This acquired knowledge informed both the architectural decisions described in this section and the feature specifications described in Section 9.2.

To enable the system to generate the personal development environment, every feature was specified in full detail before building began — covering input (what data the feature requires and where it comes from), function (what the system does and how it presents this to the user), output (what is produced and where it is stored), and system dependencies (what must be in place for the feature to operate). This specification process eliminated ambiguity during building and ensured that every design decision was deliberate rather than default.

The project function within Claude was used throughout, ensuring that all specifications, decisions, and iterations were stored within a single persistent environment. A complete design system based on the Essense brand book was imported into this environment, ensuring that the prototype would reflect the visual identity of the organisation rather than generic AI output — a deliberate choice given that Essense employees are designers who respond to visual quality and who would find a generic interface a distraction during user testing.

9.3.2 Building the Prototype: Optimising for Testability

The goal of the prototype was not to produce a finished product but to produce a system of sufficient fidelity that user testing could focus on the actual experience of using the system — rather than on resolving glitches or interpreting incomplete functionality. This fidelity threshold was deliberately set high: if the prototype were too rough, participants would spend their cognitive effort navigating its limitations rather than engaging with the developmental tasks it was designed to support, and the user test data would reflect prototype quality rather than system validity.

The Notion environment presented a constraint in this regard: its primarily text-based architecture limits the visual and interactive possibilities available within a standard page. To extend these possibilities, artefacts were built within Claude and deployed via GitHub and Vercel, producing interactive, visually rich components that could be embedded directly within Notion pages. This approach allowed the prototype to function as a near-complete system within the Notion environment — clickable, visually coherent, and linked to its underlying database logic — without requiring the full database launch that would constitute the final implementation.

The building process followed an iterative loop: a feature was built within Claude, deployed into the Notion environment, used as intended, and then assessed for functional gaps and interaction failures. A full list of required changes was compiled before the next iteration began, preventing the reactive accumulation of small fixes that typically degrades prototype coherence over time. This loop was repeated until each feature functioned as intended and the overall system could be navigated without friction.

The resulting prototype is high-fidelity in logic and flow — the interaction sequences, data relationships, and feature integrations all function as the final system would — while remaining pre-launch in terms of live database population and full Eidra ecosystem integration. It is not a brand-ready finished product; it is a fully testable representation of the final system, sufficient to generate valid empirical evidence about whether the system resolves the design requirements. Screenshots of all core features are presented as annotated figures in Section 9.2.3.

9.4 User testing setup

9.4.1 Aim of the User Tests

The prototype described in Section 9.3 requires empirical validation with end-users before the final design can be confirmed. This validation has two objectives: to assess whether the prototype resolves the five design requirements established in Chapter 6, and to generate experience-based input for the final iteration before handover. Both objectives are necessary. The first establishes whether the system does what it was designed to do; the second ensures that the final design reflects the reality of using the system rather than the logic of building it.

Testing is conducted with Essense employees rather than external experts because the central evaluation question is not whether the system is generically usable, but whether it specifically resolves the barriers identified in Chapter 5 within the operational context of Essense. Only employees with lived experience of those barriers can provide valid evidence on that question [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

9.4.2 Participant Selection

User tests were conducted with four Essense employees across roles and seniority levels, reflecting the intended user base of the system. The variation in seniority was deliberate: as established in Section 5.2.5, seniority is a significant variable in how employees experience the barriers to PD, and a sample drawn exclusively from one seniority level would risk producing findings that are not representative of the full user population. All participants provided signed informed consent (Appendix C) prior to the session; Audio recordings were consented, were used solely for researcher note-taking and were not shared externally .

9.4.3 Method

A think-aloud protocol was used as the primary evaluation method, as it externalises the cognitive processes that accompany system use and surfaces friction that retrospective self-reports tend to miss (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). This is particularly relevant here because the central evaluation question is not whether participants can complete tasks, but whether the system reduces the effort and friction associated with doing so — a distinction that only becomes visible when the cognitive experience of interaction is made explicit in real time.

9.4.3 Method

The protocol combined three measurement layers. First, real-time think-aloud observation captured the moment-to-moment cognitive experience of system use. Second, mid-task Likert scoring was collected after each thematic section of the test — covering the dashboard, goal deconstruction, reflection, micro-actions, and the training menu — to produce requirement-linked quantitative evidence while the interaction was still fresh. Mid-task scoring was preferred over a single end-of-session questionnaire because retrospective ratings are subject to recency and primacy bias (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Third, a post-session semi-structured interview provided space for participants to reflect on the overall experience, surface concerns that had not emerged during the task itself, and identify features they found most and least valuable.

Tasks were clustered into five sections, each tied to a specific design requirement, ensuring full coverage and direct traceability from requirement to evidence. The complete testing protocol is provided in Appendix H.

9.4.4 Analysis

The analysis maps each observation and Likert score to its corresponding design requirement, enabling friction points to be identified per requirement rather than per task — a distinction that keeps the analysis oriented toward the behavioural diagnosis of Chapter 5 rather than toward surface-level usability. The session interviews were transcribed and analysed to cross-check whether the qualitative data confirmed, nuanced, or contradicted the patterns emerging from the observations and scores.

A COM-B diagnostic review was applied across participants to assess whether the prototype demonstrably reduces the environmental Opportunity barriers identified in Chapter 5 — specifically, whether participants experience the system as lowering cognitive load rather than adding to it. Patterns across participants were synthesised into a prioritised set of iteration points, forming the direct input for the final design adjustments described in Section 9.5 [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

9.4.5 User Test Findings

The user tests were conducted with four Essense employees — with varying seniority levels — using the think-aloud protocol described in Section 9.4.3. What follows is a synthesis of observations, mid-task Likert scores, and post-session discussion, structured per design requirement and translated into a prioritised set of iteration points. The complete observation and scoring sheets are provided in Appendix I. The accumulated scores are shown in figure 20.

The overarching pattern across all four participants was clear and consistent: the core concept was received with genuine enthusiasm, and the system's fundamental logic — automatic tracking, time sanctity, structured reflection, goal deconstruction — was immediately recognised as valuable. What was equally consistent, however, was a shared experience of information overload. The current prototype presents too much content simultaneously, which undermines the system's central design ambition of reducing cognitive load rather than adding to it [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes]. The iteration priority is therefore not directional but architectural: the concept is validated; the hierarchy and information density require redesign.

Requirement 1 — Continuous, Sustainable Activity & Requirement 3 — Active Tracking (Dashboard & Orientation)

The dashboard and orientation tasks produced the widest spread of scores across participants (ranging from 2 to 5, averaging 3.75 for orientation and 3.5 for the dashboard overview), and the observations reveal why: the system's value is immediately apparent to participants who already have a personal development practice of their own — one participant described the dashboard as giving her back what she already did manually in Miro, but automatically — while participants without an existing tracking practice struggled to locate their entry point and understand the system's intended sequence. This finding has a direct diagnostic implication: the prototype currently assumes a level of PD self-awareness that not all employees bring to the system, which maps precisely onto the Blank Page Problem identified in Section 5.2.3 [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Goals]. The iteration required here is structural: the system needs an explicit 'first use' onboarding sequence that orients new users before the full information architecture is revealed, collapsing the dashboard into a simplified initial view with the option to unfold further detail progressively. Three of four participants explicitly requested this — variously described as 'hierarchy,' 'a more pointed system,' and 'make everything more concise.' The Calendar Sanctity feature was consistently well-received across all participants, with three of four indicating they would activate it; the exception was a senior participant who preferred full manual control over his calendar, which is consistent with the opt-in design logic already embedded in the system.

Requirement 4 — Active Reflection (Reflection & Insights)

The reflection features averaged a score of 3.63 across participants, with the insights synthesis tool identified as the most valuable single element of the system. Participants were struck by the insight output — the automatic synthesis of feedback and reflection data into longitudinal patterns — and several spontaneously expressed that this alone would change how they approached development conversations with their coaches.

The friction points were concentrated in the reflection entry flow itself: the reflection interface did not advance to a new screen after submission, creating a disorienting interaction break that all participants encountered and that disrupted the experience of the feature. This is a prototype-level implementation error rather than a design failure, and it constitutes the clearest single iteration point from the user tests. Additionally, the 'copy' option within the reflection tool was flagged as purpose-unclear by multiple participants and is consistently recommended for removal. The audio reflection format was received positively — one participant specifically noted it as the format she would use on the go — though it was observed that audio input did not link through to the insight synthesis in the prototype, a dependency that requires resolution before launch [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Automatic Motivation – Emotion].

Requirement 2 — Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions & Requirement 3 — Active Tracking (Goal Deconstruction)

The goal deconstruction feature was the highest-scoring section across all four participants, averaging 4.25, and the observations confirm that this reflects genuine functional recognition rather than politeness. Participants across all seniority levels engaged with the feature and identified it as directly solving a real problem — the inability to translate annual ambitions into concrete steps was named unprompted by two participants as the exact difficulty they currently experience. The primary friction was navigational: participants found it difficult to locate where the generated sub-goals appeared within the system after being approved, indicating that the connection between the goal breakdown tool and the goal overview requires a clearer visual link. The growth-over-time graph, embedded in this section, was identified by multiple participants as adding visual complexity without proportionate informational value at this stage of system use; the consistent recommendation was to merge this view into the dashboard rather than present it as a standalone element within the goal section [Memory, Attention and Decision Processes; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

Requirement 5 — Learning Menu & Coaching Support

The learning and coaching section produced the most varied scores (ranging from 2 to 5, averaging 3.75), with the variation traceable to two distinct sources. The training menu itself was well-received by three of four participants — the smart suggestion mode, the external search capability, and the peer rating system were each identified as genuinely useful — while one participant found the section difficult to navigate due to the constrained display width inherent to the Notion environment, a platform limitation rather than a design failure.

The coaching preparation feature was positively received in principle, though participants flagged an important concern around data visibility: it was not sufficiently clear to participants what was shared with their coach automatically versus what remained private, and this ambiguity created a sense of surveillance risk that is counter to the system's design intent [Social Opportunity – Social Influences; Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences]. Resolving this requires explicit permission indicators within the coaching interface. The training sharing function was also questioned in terms of technical feasibility — participants liked the concept but were uncertain whether the feature would function as intended in a live system, suggesting that a clearer explanation of the underlying mechanism is required at the point of use.

scale: 1 (strongly disagree) → 5 (strongly agree) · averaged across 4 participants

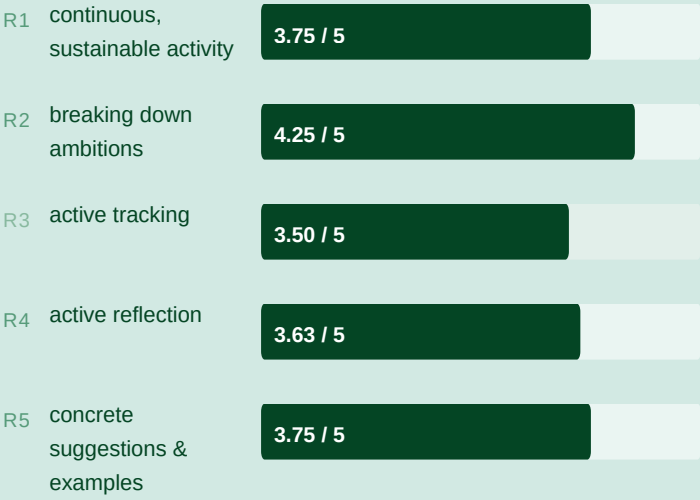


Figure 20: accumulated likert scores of the user tests.

9.4.6 Iteration points

The synthesis across all five requirement sections produces the following prioritised set of iteration points, ordered by frequency of appearance and criticality to the core design ambition:

1. Information hierarchy and density — all four participants experienced information overload at multiple points in the system. The primary structural response is a layered information architecture: a simplified dashboard as the default entry view, with progressive disclosure into sub-sections. Collapsible panels, 'i' icons for contextual clarification, and a reduced default content load are the concrete interventions indicated.
2. First-use onboarding — the absence of a guided entry sequence meant that participants without existing PD habits could not independently establish the intended usage flow. A brief orientation step — activating before the full dashboard is shown — is required to establish the system sequence: profile → goals → sub-goals → actions and reflection → insights.
3. Reflection screen transition — the technical error causing the reflection interface to fail to advance after submission must be resolved; this was the single most disruptive prototype error observed across all sessions.
4. Navigation and internal linking — the connection between the goal breakdown tool and the goal overview, between micro-actions and their parent goals, and between the roadmap and the to-do structure must be made visually explicit. Participants consistently experienced these as disconnected elements rather than a coherent system.
5. Privacy clarity in the coaching interface — the boundary between what is shared with the coach and what is not must be made unambiguous within the coaching section itself, through explicit visual indicators at the point of sharing.
6. Growth-over-time consolidation — the growth graph should be merged into the dashboard rather than presented within the goal section, reducing redundancy and increasing coherence of the overview.

9.4.7 Company Validation

The company validation walk-throughs were conducted separately with the operations Director within Essense, representing Essense, and Head of People & Culture of Eidra Netherlands & Partner, representing Eidra. As described in Section 9.4.6’s setup, the objective of these sessions was not to rate the system against requirements but to establish whether the system direction is strategically feasible and organisationally legitimate from the perspective of those responsible for its implementation. Both sessions were conducted as non-structured walk-through interviews, with the prototype presented feature by feature and representatives invited to respond freely.

The dominant response from both organisations was one of genuine strategic enthusiasm. Neither representative raised fundamental objections to the system’s direction or core concept; rather, both immediately oriented toward expansion — toward what the system could become and how it could be integrated further into the organisational ecosystem. This shift from validation to co-ownership is itself a meaningful outcome: it indicates that the system is perceived not as a prototype requiring correction, but as a viable foundation requiring development.

From the Essense validation, two structural concerns emerged alongside the positive reception. The first concerns data duplication: core employee attributes — current level, coach name, and start date — are already managed in PeopleVue, Essense’s HR system, and entering this information manually into the Notion environment creates both friction for the user and a risk of data discrepancy over time. The recommendation was unambiguous: the system must draw this data from PeopleVue rather than require manual input, eliminating the duplication at source. The second concern is closely related — time tracking. The system’s PD time monitoring must not operate independently of Float, the operational time-tracking tool already in use within Essense and Eidra. If two systems show conflicting time figures — one showing 4% development time, another showing 10% — the result is not just confusion but a credibility risk for the system itself. The explicit recommendation from the Essense representative was that the system’s time overview should pull from or align directly with Float rather than generate its own independent count.

A related clarification was raised on the 4% allocation itself: the representative confirmed that this figure functions as an indicative baseline rather than a hard requirement, and that the system should therefore allow employees to set their own PD time target rather than fixing it to a single organisational figure — a finding that directly informed the adjustable time-target input introduced in the final iteration.

Alongside these constraints, the Essense validation surfaced several points of high strategic recognition. The dashboard’s ‘planned versus actual’ development time comparison was identified as addressing a genuine organisational blind spot: employees systematically overestimate how much time they spend on personal development relative to client work, and a visible, automatic comparison provides the reality check that no current tool delivers. The coaching overview was highlighted as a standout feature — described as eliminating the manual preparation burden that currently characterises mentoring sessions and significantly raising the quality of alignment conversations. The technical approach of embedding interactive, visual components within Notion via HTML was explicitly noted as an eye-opener, with the representative indicating interest in applying the same technique in other internal contexts.

The Eidra validation raised an equivalent concern around information density — the prototype’s simultaneous presentation of all features was experienced as potentially overwhelming for a first-time user, particularly one without an existing PD practice — and reinforced the iteration priority of layered information architecture already identified in the user tests. Beyond this, the Eidra representative articulated two strategic positions that are directly relevant to the system’s future development. The first is that the system should not be imposed uniformly: senior employees with well-established personal development practices of their own do not require the system’s scaffolding, and mandatory adoption for this group risks generating resistance that undermines uptake among those who do need it. The second position concerns the longer-term platform question: PeopleVue is envisioned within Eidra as the eventual central hub for employee development across the collective, and the question of whether this system should remain in Notion permanently or eventually migrate into PeopleVue is one that requires a strategic decision at organisational level. This question is not one the system’s current design needs to resolve — the Notion architecture is both appropriate for the current stage and technically compatible with a future migration — but it is documented here as a dependency for the handover conversation.

The convergence between the two validation sessions is significant. Both organisations confirmed the core concept, identified the same primary risk (information overload / complexity of entry), and — critically — moved immediately into a conversation about expansion rather than redesign. The explicit interest expressed by both representatives in working toward complete system synergy — integrating PeopleVue for profile data, Float for time tracking, and exploring the Eidra-wide applicability of the system — establishes a clear and organisationally supported direction for the next phase of development beyond the scope of this project.

CH 9 · THE SYSTEM - With iterations

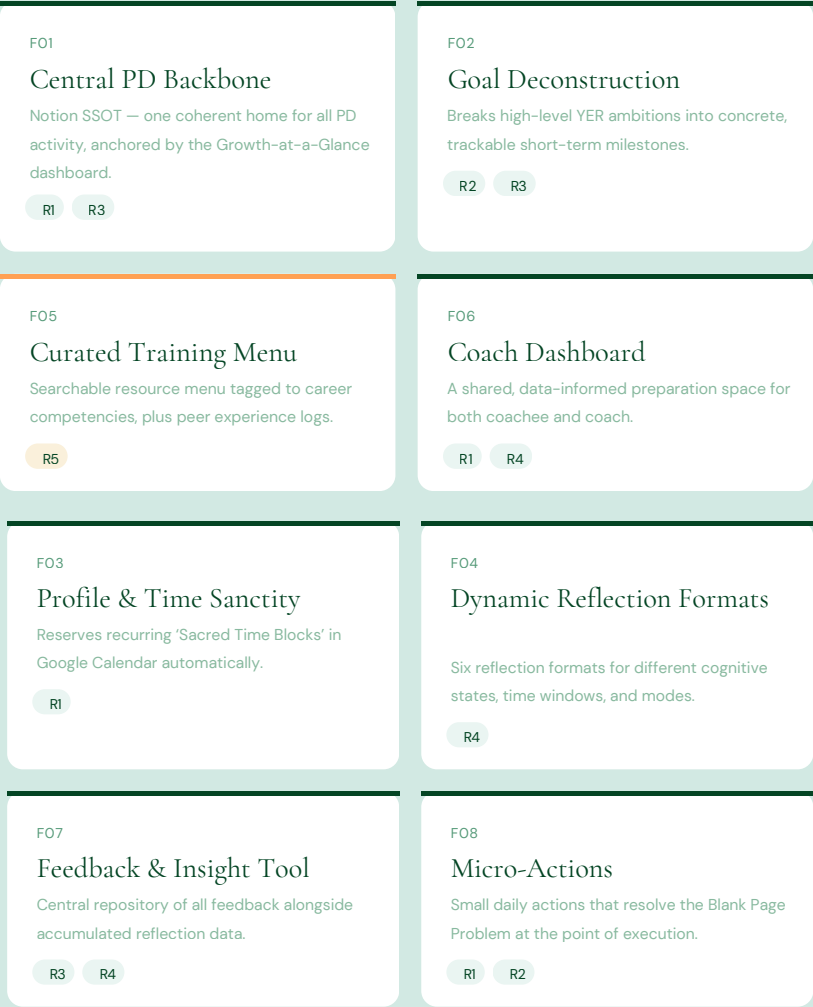


Figure 21: Overview of the features in the final system

9.5 Final Iteration

The six iteration points identified in Section 9.4.6 were each implemented and verified; the following sections document the specific changes made to the system as a result.

9.5.1 Architecture consolidation: from separate pages to a coherent whole

The original prototype was structured across fifteen pages, with profile setup, goal breakdown, and growth-over-time each occupying their own standalone page. In the Notion embed context, this created a navigation pattern that worked against the system's core design ambition: reducing cognitive load. Moving between pages interrupted the interaction flow and made the system feel administratively heavy — the opposite of the frictionless experience the design required [Memory, Attention and Decision Processes; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

The architectural response was consolidation. The profile was merged into the dashboard as a persistent profile bar, visible and editable without leaving the central overview. Goal breakdown was integrated into the goals page as a fold-out accordion within each goal entry, removing the need to navigate away to deconstruct a goal into sub-goals. The roadmap was removed entirely: its informational content was already represented elsewhere in the system, and its timeline logic added visual complexity without adding analytical value. In its place, a collapsible overview was introduced into the dashboard that brings together goals, actions, and reflection and feedback in a single consolidated view — giving the employee a simple, scannable picture of their development activity without the structural overhead of a separate tracking page. Five pages were removed from the system in total — profile.html, breakdown.html, growth.html, budget.html, and agent.html — reducing the navigation surface and ensuring that each remaining page is self-contained and purposeful.

Information hierarchy: progressive disclosure over simultaneous display

The user test observations consistently identified information overload as the primary friction point — not because the system contained too much, but because it presented too much simultaneously. Participants with existing PD habits navigated the full information architecture without difficulty; participants without an established practice could not identify a clear starting point, and the volume of simultaneously visible content compounded the Blank Page Problem the system was designed to resolve [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes]. The structural response was progressive disclosure.

The dashboard now defaults to a simplified entry view — the Growth at a Glance overview, active goals, and the week's open and completed actions — with the consolidated goals-actions-reflection overview accessible as a collapsible panel rather than dominating the default view. Contextual information indicators — 'i' icons — were introduced at recurring friction points across the system, revealing concise clarifications at the point of use without navigating the user away from their current context. Rather than reducing the system's analytical depth, this approach preserves the full information architecture while ensuring that the entry-level experience does not demand prior knowledge the system has not yet provided.

First-use onboarding

Three of four user test participants experienced difficulty establishing the system's intended usage sequence on first access. The absence of a guided entry meant that the full system — with all sections simultaneously visible — was the first thing a new user encountered, regardless of whether they had an existing PD practice. For participants without one, this produced the exact cognitive experience the system was designed to prevent [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

A three-step onboarding flow was introduced as the mandatory initial state for new users: profile setup, PD time target, and first goal entry. Only after completing these three steps does the full dashboard become visible. Returning users bypass the onboarding entirely and land directly on their overview. This ensures that the system's logic — profile, goals, sub-goals, actions, reflection, insights — is established before the employee is asked to navigate it independently.

Reflection and insights: closing the interaction loop

The reflection interface contained a technical error in the prototype that was observed in all four user test sessions: the screen did not advance after a reflection was submitted, creating a disorienting break in the interaction that left participants uncertain whether their input had been saved. This was the single most disruptive prototype error observed and was resolved in the final version — the reflection now advances to a confirmation and insight-preview screen upon submission, completing the interaction loop and connecting the act of reflection directly to the insights feature. The copy option, flagged as purpose-unclear by multiple participants, was removed from the reflection interface entirely.

The audio reflection format was rebuilt from the ground up. The original prototype used the Web Speech API — a live transcription approach limited to Chrome and Edge — replaced in the final system with the MediaRecorder API, which records audio across Chrome, Safari, Firefox, and Edge.

On completion, the recording is transcribed via the Whisper API and the transcript is passed to Claude, which structures it into the standard reflection point format— ensuring that spoken reflections feed into the insights synthesis identically to written ones.

The insights page was rebuilt from a text-copy display into a genuine AI synthesis layer: Claude analyses the full accumulated set of reflections and feedback to identify longitudinal patterns — strengths, recurring growth areas, and suggested next steps — rather than presenting raw input. The choose-insight-to-goal flow was established as a three-step process: select an insight from the synthesised list, shape it into a goal statement — either written manually by the employee or with Claude's assistance — and save it as a new goal or as a sub-goal within an existing one. This closes the loop between reflection and action in a way the original prototype did not.

Goals: AI integration and multi-select

The goal breakdown tool — previously a separate page — was integrated as a fold-out within the goals accordion, making sub-goal generation accessible within the same view as the parent goal. Sub-goals are generated by Claude based on the goal title, the employee's current and target career level, and their indicated comfort level, and require active approval before being saved.

The employee may alternatively write sub-goals manually, with the breakdown tool functioning as a structured input form rather than an AI-generation interface — ensuring that employees who prefer full authorship over their development structure are not required to use the AI route to access the feature.

The photo-to-goals feature was rebuilt from a single-goal extraction to a multi-select workflow: uploading an image causes Claude to extract all visible goals, which are presented as a pre-ticked checklist. The employee deselects any they wish to exclude and confirms the remainder in a single action.

Training: functional search and inspiration

The goal selector in the training menu was present in the original prototype but non-functional — the feature existed but did not return results. In the final system, it operates as intended: the employee selects an active goal and the tool searches for relevant sources matched to that goal, returning results the employee can act on directly.

Alongside this, a separate source suggestion tab presents a broader set of resources for inspiration, filterable by time investment and source type, preserving the browse mode that allows discovery beyond a specific active goal. Each resource can be added directly as an action, connecting training discovery to the tracking system.

Coaching: simplified and collapsible

The coaching feature was redesigned to reduce information density. The final version organises the coaching environment into four collapsible components — session details, since last session, what I want to discuss, and commitments from last time — each accessible independently rather than presented as a single unbroken block. A separate share with coach function allows the employee to choose what is passed to the coach, maintaining the privacy distinction identified as important in the user tests without making it architecturally complex [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

Calendar sanctity: from manual to automated

Calendar sanctity was integrated into the dashboard as a collapsible component rather than existing as a separate configuration section. The underlying principle is unchanged — protecting dedicated PD time in the employee's calendar — but the interaction was made fully automatic. After an initial daytime preference is set, the system searches for a free slot a week in advance and surfaces it without requiring further input from the employee. This sits alongside the option to choose a fixed recurring time for employees who prefer a set slot over an automatically identified one. The result is a feature that operates in the background once configured, consistent with the system's broader design logic of reducing ongoing cognitive cost rather than replacing one form of administration with another [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

Demo and showcase infrastructure

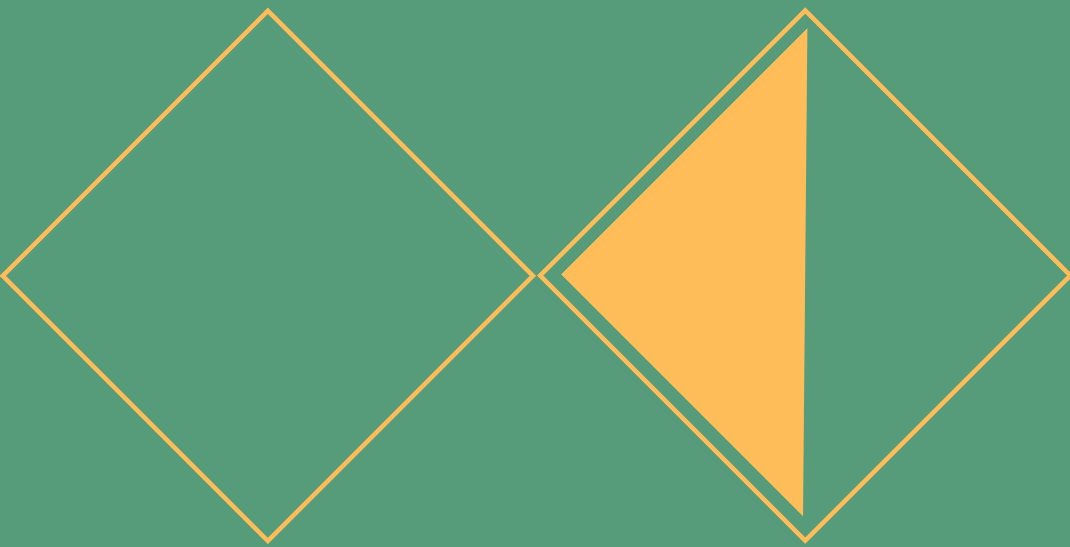
To enable the system to be presented and validated without requiring live user data, a URL parameter system was established: ?demo=inuse loads a full sample dataset representing a system used for several weeks, and ?demo=firstpresents the onboarding state as it appears to a new user on day one. Two dedicated Notion hubs were created for these states, providing fully isolated showcase environments. All AI features are built with graceful degradation — when the API is unavailable, scripted fallbacks ensure that the showcase experience is never broken.

C Develop

Divergent phase - chapter 7-9

In this phase

- Co-creation
- Concept development
- Harris evaluation
- Prototype development
- User testing



PHASE SUMMARY

The Develop phase has moved from five design requirements to a validated, fully functional system. The co-creation session translated the behavioural diagnosis into a structured possibility space — generating ideas across the five requirement dimensions through employee involvement, ensuring that the ideation was grounded in lived experience rather than researcher interpretation alone. The Harris profile evaluation provided the comparative mechanism through which three concept directions were assessed against one another, with system synergy confirmed as the non-negotiable criterion and the hybrid of Concepts 2 and 3 selected as the direction that best resolved the full requirement set without introducing the structural risks of either direction alone. The prototyping phase built that direction into a testable, high-fidelity system across seven functional pages, deployed via Vercel and embedded within Notion. User testing with four Essense employees and validation sessions with both Essense and Eidra generated the empirical evidence and strategic input through which the final iteration was made.

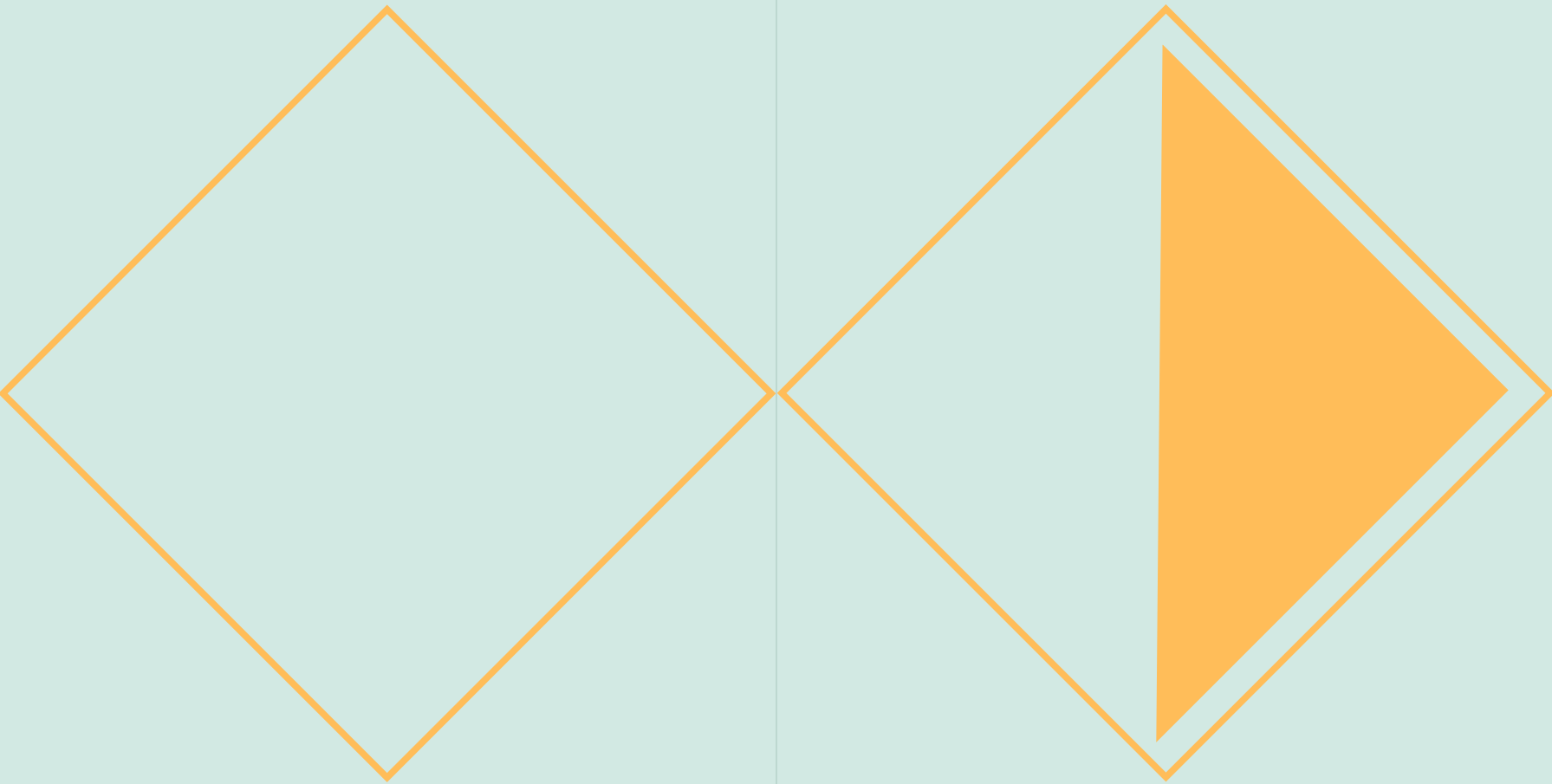
What the Develop phase delivers is not a prototype awaiting further development — it is a complete, empirically validated system ready for organisational deployment. Every feature is traceable to a specific barrier identified in the behavioural diagnosis, every iteration point is grounded in empirical observation, and the strategic direction for the system's next phase has been confirmed by the organisations that will implement it. The Deliver phase that follows presents the final system in full and closes the academic argument by returning to the research questions with which the project began.

D deliver

Divergent phase - chapter 10-13

In this phase

- Final design
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Discussion
- Reflection



PHASE INTRODUCTION

The Deliver phase closes the Double Diamond. Where the Develop phase produced a complete, validated system ready for deployment, the Deliver phase presents that system in full, answers the research questions, and ensures that the academic conclusions are accompanied by the practical materials the organisation needs to act on them.

Four chapters constitute this phase. Chapter 10 presents the final system in full — its design logic, ecosystem architecture, complete walkthrough of all seven pages, and handover package, including the conditions under which live organisational deployment becomes possible once the Eidra integration token is issued. Chapter 11 returns to the research questions, verifies the five design requirements against the final system, and provides a concrete implementation plan. Chapter 12 addresses the project's theoretical contribution, its limitations, and the directions for future research it opens. Chapter 13 closes with a personal reflection on the practice of strategic design.

Final deliverable

- 10.1 System Narrative & Design Logic
- 10.2 Value Proposition
- 10.3 Showcase Hubs: Testing and Demonstration Infrastructure
- 10.4 Ecosystem Architecture & Technical Infrastructure
- 10.5 The Final System: Full walkthrough
- 10.6 Implementation Readiness & Handover

10

This chapter presents the final deliverable — the personal development system designed for Essense, built across Notion, Google Calendar, and Claude AI, and ready for organisational deployment. It does not re-argue the design rationale; that is established across Chapters 5 through 9. What it does is present the delivered system as a coherent whole: its architecture, its Notion environment, its AI layer, and the practical conditions under which it can be deployed, maintained, and expanded.

Before presenting the system in full, a constraint on the completeness of its validation must be stated. The system architecture is built across Notion, Google Calendar, and Claude AI, with Notion functioning as the central data environment. A number of the system's core features — specifically those dependent on live database integration and automated data flows within Notion — require an integration token issued by Eidra at the organisational level. This token grants the necessary API permissions for the system to operate across the Eidra infrastructure. The request for this permission was submitted well in advance of this submission; however, at the time of writing, the token has not yet been granted, as organisational approval processes within Eidra operate on a timeline outside the researcher's control. As a result, the full end-to-end functionality of the integration-dependent features could not be tested under live conditions. What can be presented and validated is the complete system architecture, the full setup guide, all interface designs and Notion templates, and the instructions required for immediate deployment once the token is issued. The system is built and ready; the remaining step is an administrative permission, not a design gap. This distinction is important: the constraint is institutional rather than conceptual, and it does not affect the integrity of the design logic or the validity of the user testing conducted on the non-integration-dependent components in Chapter 9.

10.1 System Narrative & Design Logic

The final system is a personal development environment for employees at Essense, operating directly within the digital infrastructure the organisation already uses — not alongside it. This architectural principle is not incidental; it is the direct resolution of the system synergy constraint established in Section 5.1.2 and confirmed as the non-negotiable dealbreaker criterion in the Harris profile evaluation.

The design logic rests on a single principle established in the behavioural diagnosis of Section 5.2: the root cause of personal development failure at Essense is not a lack of willingness but a lack of environmental architecture. Employees hold a growth mindset and a genuine desire to develop; what they lack is a structure that makes development possible within the operational conditions of agency life — high workload, shifting project allocations, and the consistent depletion of the cognitive reserves that PD requires. The system addresses this not by asking employees to invest more effort, but by reducing the cognitive cost of development to the point where routine engagement can become habitual. Tracking is automatic. Reflection offers a choice of format rather than a blank field. Goal-setting provides structure rather than demanding it from scratch. The system does not add to the employee's workload — it restructures what they already need to do so that it costs less [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

The system operates within two interconnected Notion environments: the personal hub and the PD general page. The personal hub is each employee's individual PD environment — goals, reflections, actions, insights, and coaching preparation in one place. In the fully deployed system, every Essense employee has their own. The PD general page is the organisational backdrop: an Essense-maintained resource covering the career framework, the 4% time allocation, the coaching structure, and the relevant Eidra guidelines. The personal hub is the tool; the PD general page gives it organisational context [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

A short scenario makes the system's logic concrete. Consider Sophie, a medior service designer at Essense. At her year-end review, she set an ambition: to become more confident in client-facing presentations. Under the old situation, that ambition would have lived in a Miro board she opened twice a year — once to write it, once to realise she had not acted on it. In the new system, Sophie opens her personal hub and enters the goal once. The goal deconstruction feature breaks it into concrete sub-steps — shadow a senior colleague's pitch, run an internal practice session, request feedback after her next client meeting — each with a suggested starting resource. The first action is small enough to start this week, and the time to do it is already protected: a recurring slot sits in her Google Calendar, untouched by project bookings. When she completes the practice session, she does not file a report; she logs it in three taps, and her dashboard updates automatically. Two weeks later, a reflection prompt asks her how the client meeting went — she records a thirty-second audio note on her way home. By her next coaching session, the system has quietly assembled a picture of her progress she did not have to construct herself. Nothing here asked Sophie to do more than she already wanted to do. The system simply removed the friction that, under the old conditions, would have stopped her before she began.

The project that produced this system began with a signal: an internal Essense survey showed employee dissatisfaction with personal development. That signal pointed not to a lack of ambition — Essense employees hold a demonstrably strong growth mindset, and the literature is unambiguous that creative professionals in particular carry the psychological disposition to develop (Karwowski, 2017) — but to a structural failure. The conditions for development were not in place. The system that existed had become obsolete. And without a structure that makes development possible within the operational reality of agency life, even the most motivated employee defaults to compliance rather than growth.

This matters beyond the individual. As established in Chapter 1, personal development is not a peripheral benefit — it is a primary driver of the outcomes Essense depends on. PD opportunities develop the human capital that sustains competitive advantage in a fast-changing, AI-influenced creative sector (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Active development is positively associated with job engagement across professional contexts (Fletcher, 2019), because employees find greater personal meaning in their roles when they are given room to grow. It fulfils self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1943), strengthening employees' emotional bond with the organisation and improving psychological wellbeing (Basher et al., 2025). And it is a primary driver of retention — employees who develop do not merely stay, they thrive (Blackwell et al., 2007; Meylani, 2024). Retention, engagement, wellbeing, quality of work, and competitive capacity: the literature establishes personal development as an effective lever for all of these simultaneously. The cost of a failing PD system is therefore not abstract — it is felt in each of these dimensions.

The system delivered in this chapter is designed to close that gap. Its value proposition operates at three levels. For the individual employee, the system reduces the cognitive cost of development to the point where routine engagement becomes natural rather than exceptional. Goals are broken down into concrete steps. Reflection is available in a format that fits the moment rather than demanding a fixed level of effort. Development time is automatically protected in the calendar. Actions are tracked without separate logging. Feedback is synthesised into longitudinal insight rather than lost after the conversation. The employee does not need to construct the architecture of their own development from scratch — the system provides it, leaving cognitive capacity free for the genuinely developmental work of growth, ambition, and self-direction [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement]. This directly addresses the dissatisfaction identified in the initial survey: the overall system impression gathered during user testing pointed consistently toward enthusiasm — participants recognised the system as making PD genuinely easier rather than adding a new administrative layer to an already full workload.

For the coach, the system removes the information asymmetry that currently characterises coaching sessions. Rather than relying on the coachee's recall of what happened since the last conversation, the coach arrives with a complete picture of development activity — goals, actions completed, reflections logged, feedback received — enabling sessions to be substantive rather than reconstructive [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

For Essense and Eidra as organisations, the system makes the 4% PD time allocation visible, measurable, and organisationally accountable for the first time. It embeds the Eidra career framework and Essense's coaching structure into the daily working environment rather than leaving them as documents employees consult once a year. And because the intelligence layer is prompt-driven rather than hard-coded, the system can evolve alongside the organisation — preventing the obsolescence that ended the previous PD playbook. The strategic ambition Essense identified at the outset of this project — a system that is continuous, structured, and aligned with both Essense's culture and Eidra's guidelines, one that concretely improves employee satisfaction regarding personal development — is what the system is built to deliver.

As noted in the Chapter 10 introduction, the Eidra integration token has not yet been issued; the personal hubs cannot therefore go live in their final form at the time of this submission. To present the complete system, demonstrate its functionality, and enable it to be experienced as intended, a showcase infrastructure was built alongside the personal hub architecture. This showcase is not the prototype used in user testing; it is the final delivered system, presented in a form that makes it fully navigable and testable in the absence of live organisational data.

The showcase consists of two dedicated Notion hubs, each representing a distinct system state. The first — the system-in-use hub — presents the full system with a complete representative dataset: an employee several weeks into using the system, with two active goals and their sub-goals, a set of completed actions, logged reflections, received feedback, and a coaching session approaching. Every feature is populated, every AI interaction is live, and the full cycle of goal, action, reflection, and insight is visible. The second — the first-usage hub — presents the system in its onboarding state, exactly as a new employee would encounter it on day one: empty of data, beginning with the three-step onboarding flow, with the full system visible only once that flow is complete. Together, these two states allow the system to be demonstrated at any point in the employee lifecycle. The showcase hubs are a transitional infrastructure. Once the Eidra integration token is issued and the system is deployed organisationally, the showcase hubs become redundant. Each Essense employee will receive their own personal hub, beginning with the onboarding flow and building their own live dataset from that point. The showcase hubs can then be archived. The path from showcase to live deployment requires no redesign — the system is architecturally identical; only the data population changes from sample to live.

Ecosystem Architecture & Technical Infrastructure

The system operates across three technical layers.

The frontend layer consists of seven functional HTML/JavaScript pages — dashboard, goals, reflection, tracker, insights, coach, and training — plus a coach overview page for the coach-side environment. Each page is deployed as a static file on Vercel and embedded within Notion via iFrame, allowing the full interactive system to live inside the Notion environment without requiring Notion's own functionality to support it. Data is stored in localStorage per user, namespaced to prevent cross-contamination. This architecture makes the system immediately functional for the current stage; the path to a shared multi-user database — which would enable cross-device data access and the live coach overview — is documented in Section 10.5.

The intelligence layer consists of two Vercel serverless functions. The first — api/chat.js — proxies all AI features to the Anthropic Claude API, keeping the API key server-side. This function powers the talk-it-through reflection format, the insights synthesis, sub-goal generation, career framework suggestions, photo-to-goals extraction, and the training search. The second — api/transcribe.js — handles audio reflection transcription via the OpenAI Whisper API, converting recorded audio into structured text before Claude synthesises it into reflection points. All AI features are built with graceful degradation: when the API is unavailable, scripted fallbacks ensure the system remains fully navigable [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

Figure 22 visualises this architecture. The path to a shared multi-user database — which would enable cross-device data access and the live coach overview — is documented in Section 10.6.

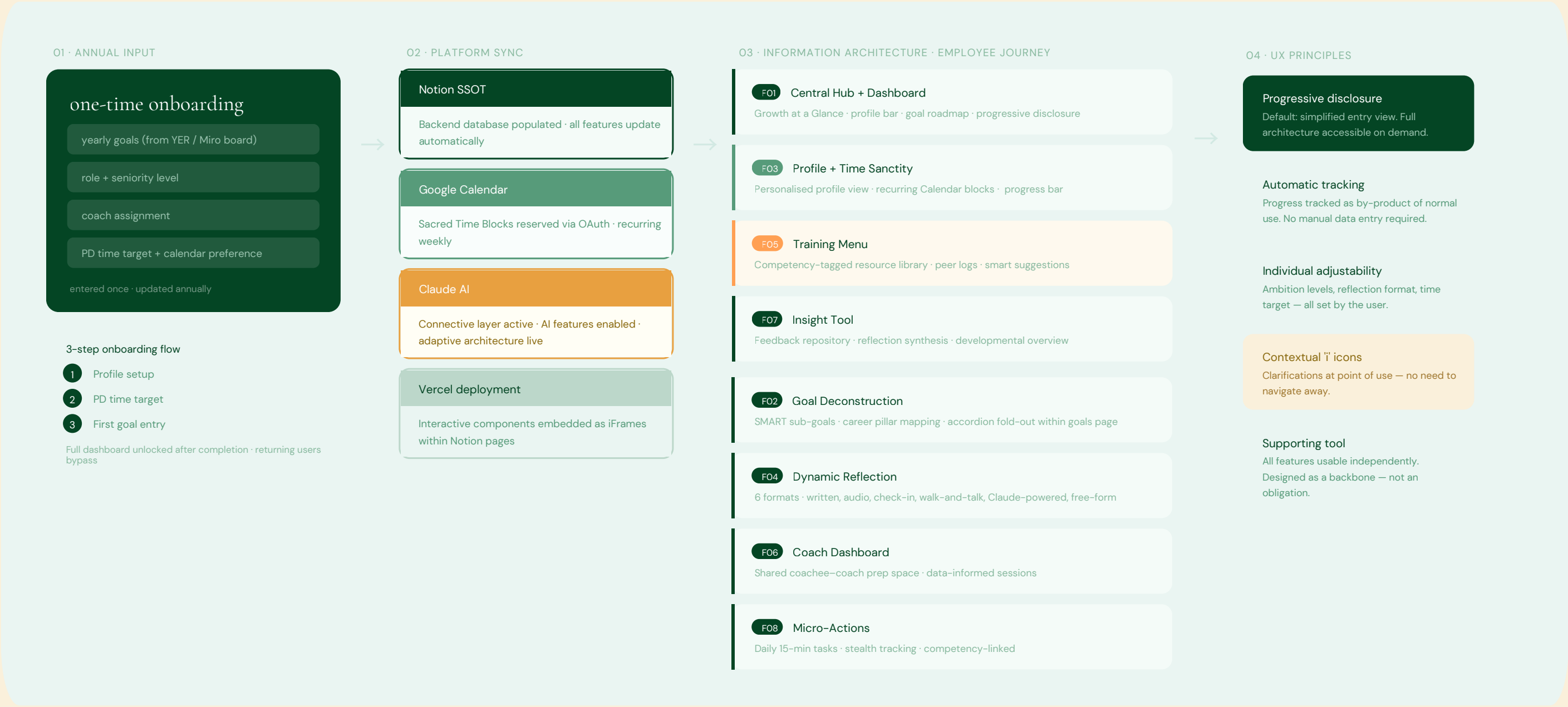


Figure 22: Ecosystem architecture diagram showing data flow between the seven HTML/JS frontend pages, Vercel serverless functions, Claude API, Whisper API, localStorage, and Notion iFrame embeds. Google Calendar is connected via OAuth. The shared multi-user database is indicated as a pending next-phase integration.

10.5 The Final System: Full walkthrough

The following sections describe each page of the final system as it exists at handover — after the architectural consolidation and iteration documented in Section 9.5. The features described here are those of the delivered system, not the prototype. Where elements changed between the prototype and the final version, this is noted within the relevant section with a reference to the iteration logic in Section 9.5.

10.5.1 Dashboard

The dashboard is the entry point and the central hub of the system — the single place from which all personal development activity is initiated, tracked, and reviewed. It opens in one of two states depending on user history. New users encounter a three-step onboarding flow — profile setup, PD time target, and first goal entry — before the full dashboard is revealed, ensuring that the system's logic is established before the employee is asked to navigate it independently. Returning users land directly on the dashboard.

The default dashboard view presents the Growth at a Glance overview, the employee's active goals, and the week's open and completed actions. A consolidated collapsible overview brings together goals, actions, and reflection and feedback in a single space, providing a clear picture of development activity without the visual complexity of the roadmap format present in the prototype. Additional detail — including the full time budget breakdown — is accessible via further collapsible panels. The profile bar sits persistently at the top of the dashboard, showing name, role, level, coach, and start date, editable in place. Contextual 'i' icons appear at recurring information points across the dashboard, surfacing brief clarifications without navigating the user away from their current context [Memory, Attention and Decision Processes; Psychological Capability – Knowledge].

Calendar Sanctity is integrated into the dashboard as a collapsible component. After a daytime preference is set — morning, midday, or afternoon — the system automatically identifies a free slot in the employee's calendar a week in advance and presents it as a formatted card with a direct Google Calendar link for one-click confirmation. Alongside this automated option, a fixed recurring time can be set for employees who prefer consistency. Once configured, the feature operates in the background without further input — a structural time-protection mechanism rather than a repeated administrative task [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

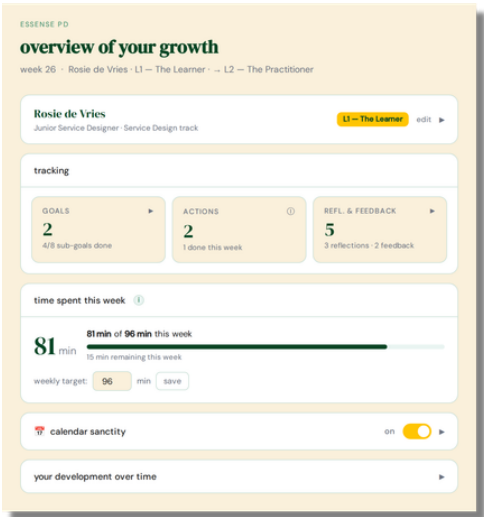


Figure 23: The dashboard in its default state. It summarises the user's profile, three tracking tiles (goals, actions, reflections & feedback), weekly professional-development time progress, and collapsed sections for calendar sanctity and development over time.

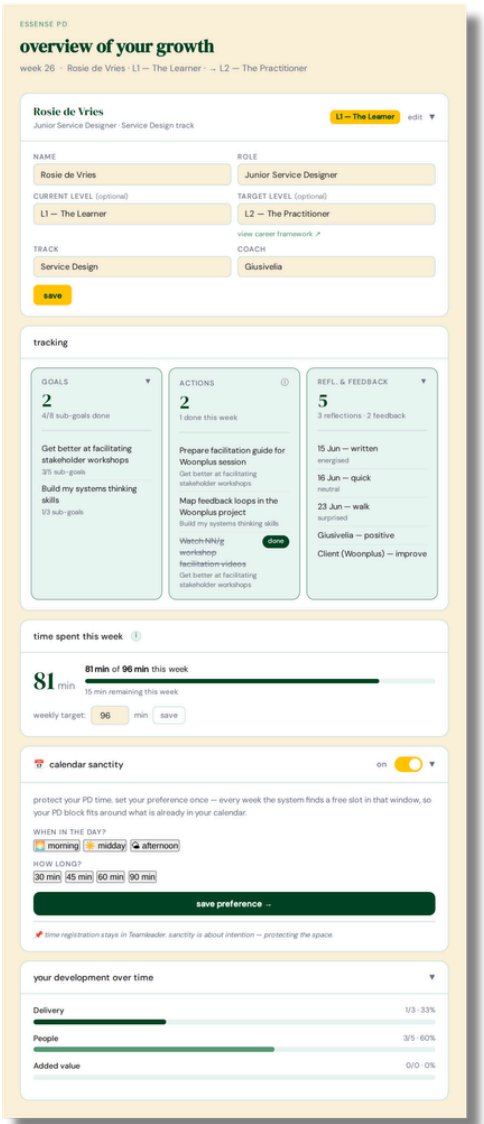


Figure 24: The same dashboard with all sections expanded: the editable profile fields, the tracking tiles unfolded to show the underlying goals, actions and reflections, the calendar-sanctity preference settings, and the development-over-time breakdown across the three competence dimensions.

10.5.2 Goals

The goals page supports goal creation through four entry modes: manual entry, AI-generated suggestions based on the employee's current and target career level and selected career framework dimension, career framework browsing, and photo-to-goals extraction via Claude Vision. The photo-to-goals feature operates as a multi-select workflow: uploading an image causes Claude to extract all visible goals, tasks, and intentions, which are presented as a pre-ticked checklist. The employee deselects any to exclude and confirms the remainder in a single action.

Goal breakdown is integrated directly into the goals page as a fold-out accordion within each goal entry, removing the separate breakdown page present in the prototype. The employee opens the breakdown tool from within the goal. Sub-goals can be written manually or generated with AI assistance: when the AI route is selected, the employee indicates their comfort level and Claude produces three to five SMART-structured suggestions, each with a rationale, timeframe, and suggested starting resource. Sub-goals require active approval before activation regardless of how they were created, preserving the employee's agency over their development direction while eliminating the open-ended cognitive labour of constructing that structure independently [Reflective Motivation – Intentions; Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals].

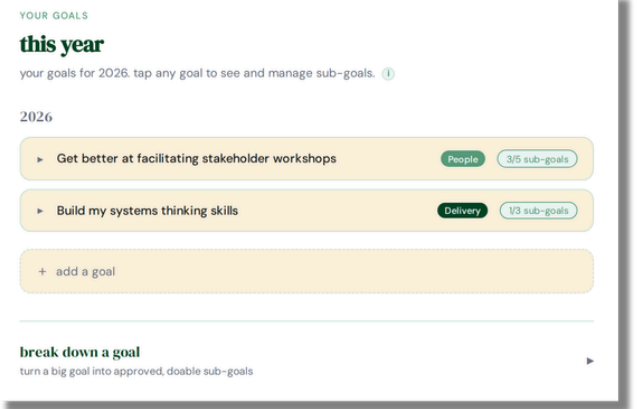


Figure 25: The goals page, showing the user's two active goals for the year, each tagged by competence dimension and annotated with a sub-goal completion count; sub-goals are collapsed.

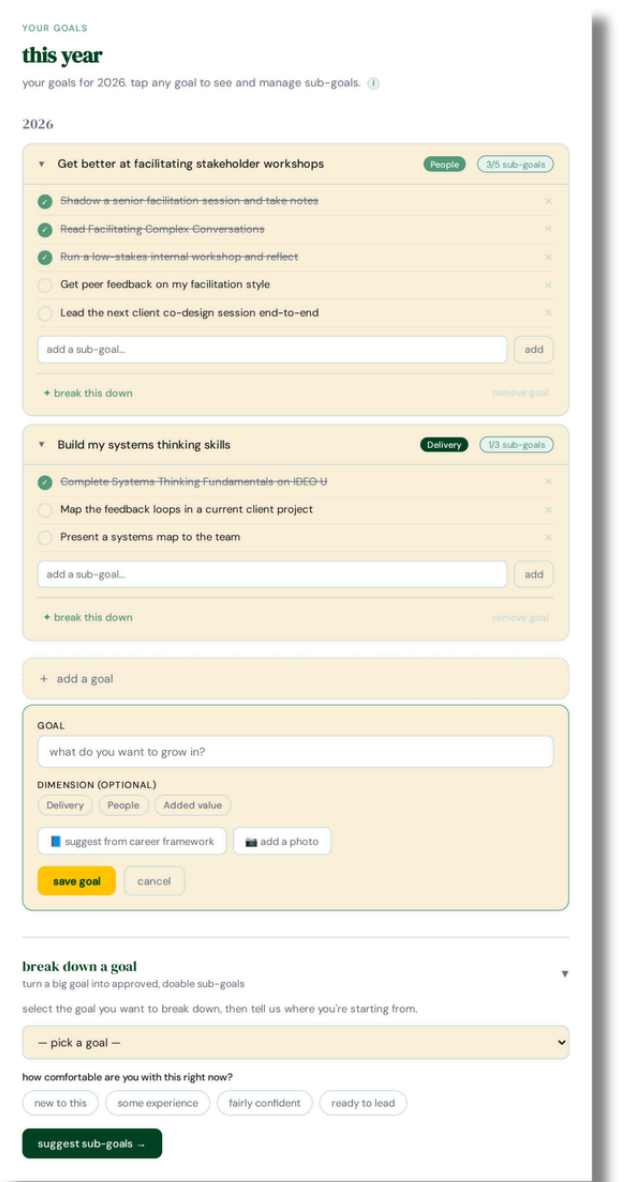


Figure 26: The goals page fully expanded: each goal unfolded to reveal its sub-goals and progress, the add-goal form, and the AI-assisted “break down a goal” panel for generating sub-goals from a chosen goal and confidence level.

10.5.3 Reflection

The reflection page offers six formats: written, quick check-in, walk-and-talk, talk-it-through — a live Claude-powered conversation that responds dynamically to the employee's input — audio, and free-form. The audio format uses the MediaRecorder API, recording across all major browsers; on completion the recording is transcribed via the Whisper API and structured by Claude into the standard reflection point format — context, went well, challenging, key insight, next. All formats advance to a confirmation and insight-preview screen upon submission, completing the interaction loop and connecting the act of reflection directly to the insights feature. Completed reflections are stored automatically and feed into the insights synthesis without any additional data entry from the employee.

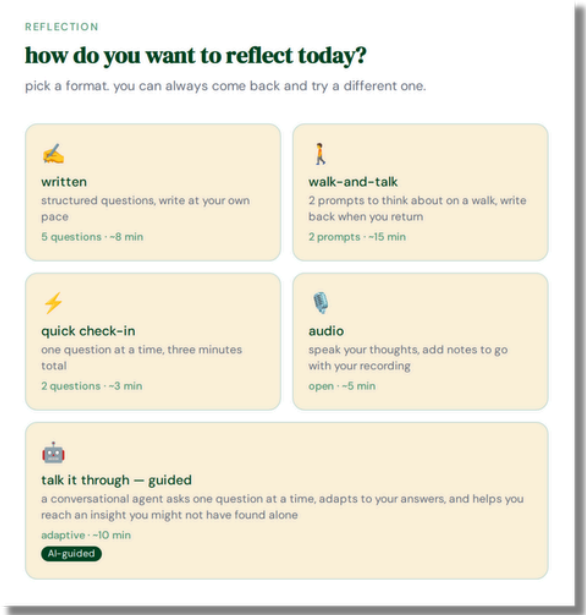


Figure 27: The reflection page's format selection, offering five formats: written, walk-and-talk, quick check-in, audio, and an AI-guided conversation.

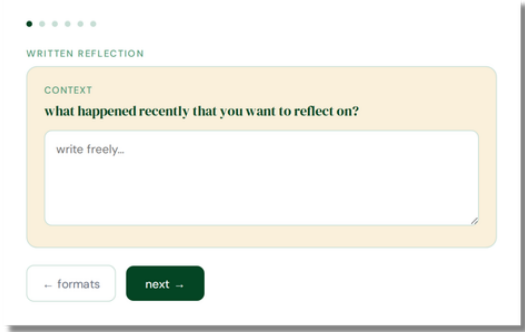


Figure 28: The written-reflection format, showing the step-based prompt structure (here the opening "context" question).

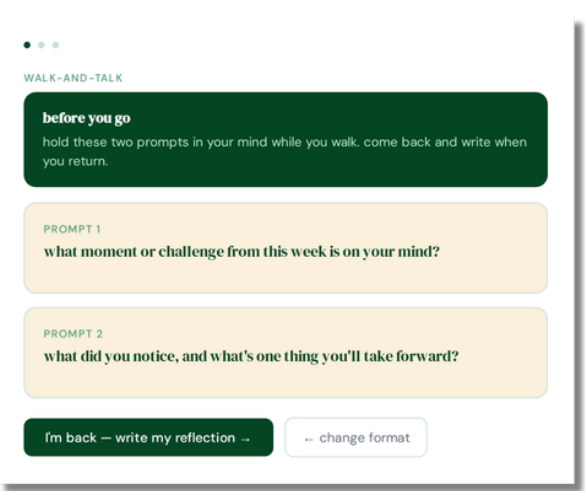


Figure 29: The walk-and-talk format, presenting two prompts to hold in mind during a walk before writing on return.

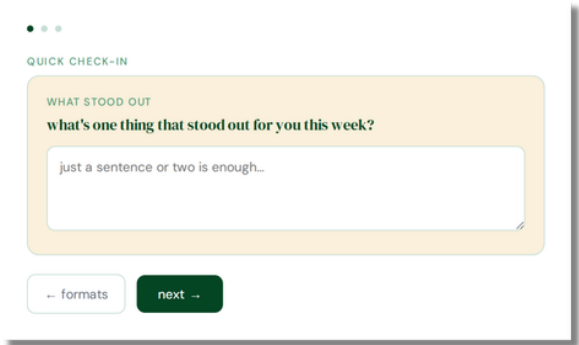


Figure 30: The quick check-in format, presenting one short question at a time for a low-effort reflection.

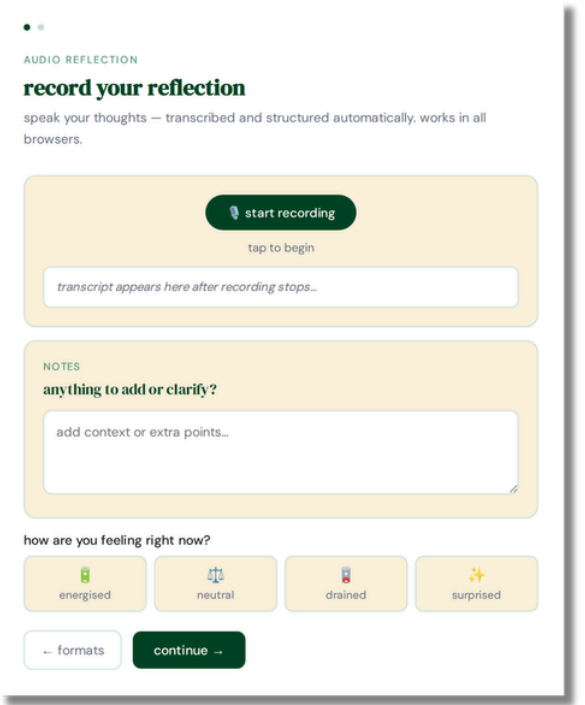


Figure 31: The audio format, allowing the user to record a spoken reflection (transcribed automatically) and add written notes.

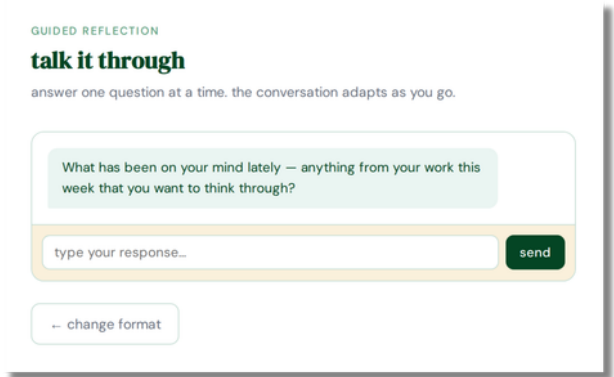


Figure 32: The AI-guided format, a conversational reflection in which the system asks one adaptive question at a time.

10.5.4 Tracker

The tracker functions as the actions log, displaying both open planned actions and actions completed in the current week. Completing an action automatically updates the time budget and the Growth at a Glance dashboard — the stealth tracking mechanism that converts a System 2 administrative task into a System 1 interaction taking under sixty seconds [Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

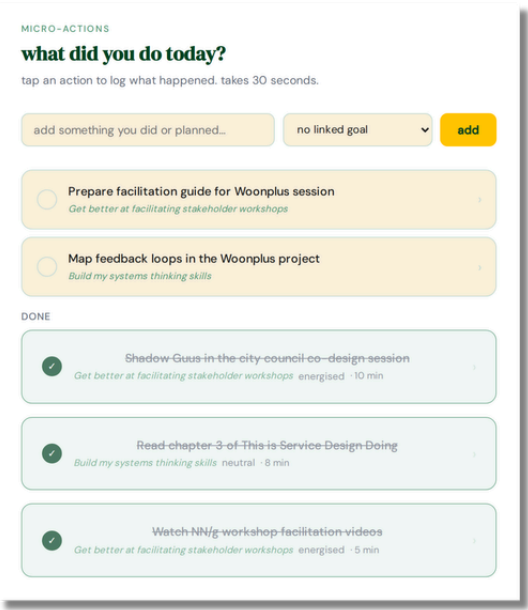


Figure 33: The micro-actions tracker, listing open and completed actions; each is linked to a goal, and completed actions show logged time and energy.

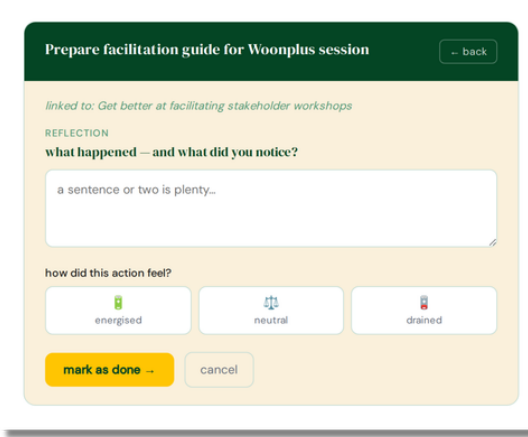


Figure 34: The logging view for a single action — a short written reflection and an energy rating before the action is marked done.

10.5.5 Insights

The insights page synthesises the employee's accumulated reflections and feedback using Claude, identifying longitudinal patterns — strengths, recurring growth areas, and suggested next steps — rather than displaying raw input. A choose-insight-to-goal flow operates in three steps: select an insight from the synthesised list, shape it into a goal statement — either written directly by the employee or formed with Claude's assistance — and save it as a new goal or sub-goal within an existing one. This closes the loop between reflection and action, ensuring that the insight synthesis is generative rather than retrospective.

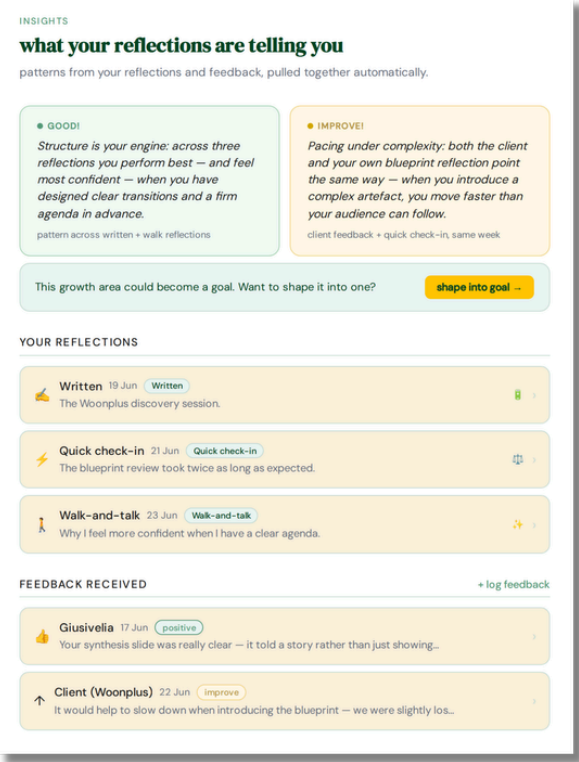


Figure 35: The insights page, surfacing automatically detected patterns (a strength and a growth area) drawn from reflections and feedback, with contributing entries listed below.



Figure 36: An individual reflection opened from the insights page, showing its full structured content and the logged time and energy.

10.5.6 Coach

The coach page organises the preparation environment into four collapsible components: session details, since last session, what I want to discuss, and commitments from last time. Each component is accessible independently, reducing the information density of the prototype's coaching interface. A separate share with coach function allows the employee to select what is passed to their coach, with explicit visibility indicators distinguishing what is shared by default, what requires active permission, and what remains private [Social Opportunity – Social Influences].

The coach overview page provides the coach-side environment: a consolidated view of all coachees' development activity, enabling the coach to arrive at each session with full context.

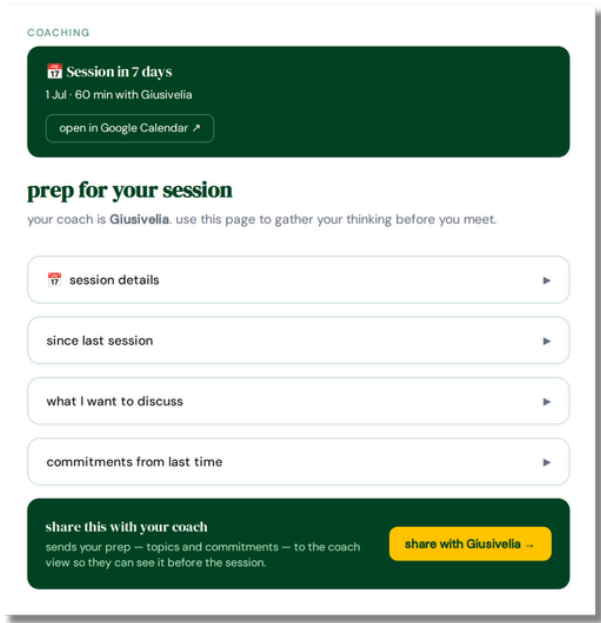


Figure 37: The coaching-preparation page — the upcoming-session banner and four collapsed preparation sections.

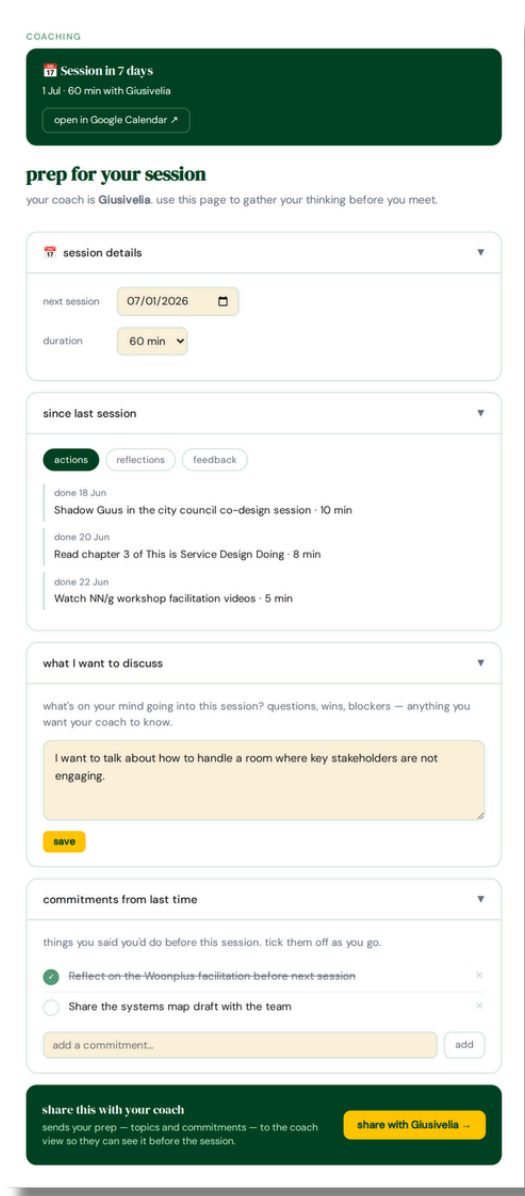


Figure 38: The coaching-preparation page fully expanded — session details, activity since the last session, discussion topics, and tracked commitments, with the option to share notes with the coach.

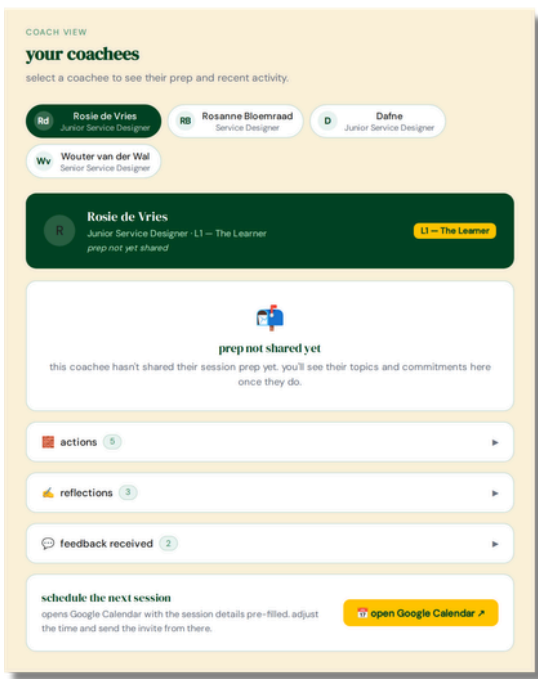


Figure 39: The coach view, showing the roster of coachees before any selection.

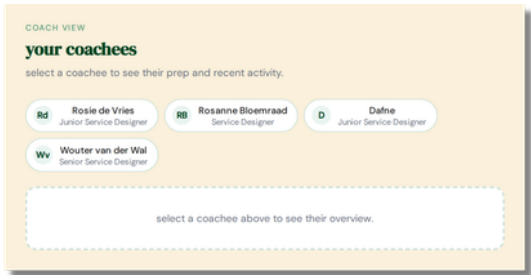


Figure 40: The coach view with a coachee selected, displaying their profile, prep-sharing status, and a summary of recent activity.

10.5.7 Training

The training page operates in two modes. The goal-matched search allows the employee to select an active goal, upon which the system searches the curated training catalogue and returns matched resources with a one-sentence rationale; each result can be added directly as an action, connecting discovery to tracking. The source discovery tab presents the full catalogue for independent browsing, filterable by time investment and source type — an inspiration layer for development directions beyond a specific active goal.

Together, these two modes resolve the entry barrier identified in Section 5.2.7: the absence of concrete examples as a primary contributor to the Blank Page Problem [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources].

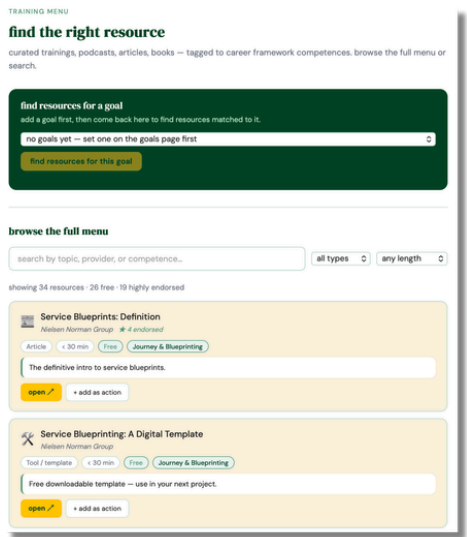


Figure 41: The training resource menu — a searchable, filterable catalogue of trainings, podcasts, articles, and books tagged to career-framework competences, including colleague-endorsed resources.

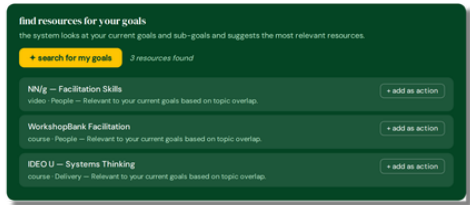


Figure 42: The training page's goal-based search expanded — the system suggests resources matched to the user's current goals, each addable as an action.

10.6 Implementation Readiness & Handover

The final system is handed over to Essense and Eidra in a state of full functional readiness for immediate deployment — pending the integration token described in the Chapter 10 introduction. All seven pages, all AI features, and all three Notion hub configurations — personal, system-in-use, and first-usage — are live and accessible. The system is fully configured to connect to the Anthropic Claude API through the Vercel serverless function; activation of the AI features requires the organisation to add an ANTHROPIC_API_KEY to the Vercel environment, a process documented in full in the integration setup guide and addressed as a design consideration in Section 12.2. The system has been tested with four Essense employees and validated with organisational representatives from both Essense and Eidra.

Audio transcription via Whisper requires the addition of an OpenAI API key to the Vercel environment — an estimated fifteen minutes of effort once the account is in place. All other AI features are fully active without further configuration.

The integrations identified as next-phase priorities in the company validation are each well-defined and architecturally compatible with the current system. PeopleVue integration would pull employee profile data — role, level, coach, start date — directly into the dashboard, eliminating the manual profile entry currently required and ensuring that the system's data stays consistent with the organisation's HR source of truth. Float integration would align the system's PD time tracking with the operational time-tracking tool already in use at Essense and Eidra, preventing the data discrepancy that arises when two systems produce different time figures for the same employee. A shared multi-user database — via Supabase or Vercel KV — would enable cross-device data access, real coach overview functionality, and the removal of the localStorage dependency that currently limits data portability. The handover package includes an integration setup guide specifying, per integration, the token or OAuth flow required, the relevant data fields, and the estimated implementation effort.

The handover package further includes the full feature specification, and a prompt and installation guide enabling internal administrators to update and extend the AI-powered features without requiring the original designer. This last element is the mechanism through which the system addresses the adaptivity requirement of RQ3: because the intelligence layer is prompt-driven rather than hard-coded, the system can be reconfigured as Essense's career framework, coaching structure, or organisational context evolves — without a rebuild. The previous PD playbook at Essense became obsolete because it was static; the final system is designed so that obsolescence requires a deliberate decision rather than occurring by default.

The strategic direction confirmed by both organisations in the company validation — complete ecosystem synergy integrating PeopleVue, Float, and Eidra-wide applicability of the system across the collective — is documented in the handover materials as the concrete next phase. Both Essense and Eidra confirmed their intent to pursue this direction; the conditions and considerations for doing so are addressed in Chapter 11.

Table 5 maps all eight system features against the five design requirements, showing how the full requirement set is addressed and where features reinforce one another across multiple requirements. ● = primary requirement addressed by this feature.

Features × Requirements × Research Questions

CH 10 · THE FINAL SYSTEM								
features × requirements × research questions								
● addressed · not addressed								
FEATURE	R1 continuous	R2 break down	R3 tracking	R4 reflection	R5 examples	RQ1 desires	RQ2 barriers	RQ3 format
F01 Central PD Backbone Notion SSOT · Growth at a Glance · coherent PD hub	●	·	●	·	·	●	●	●
F02 Goal Deconstruction SMART sub-goals · Blank Page resolver	·	●	●	·	·	●	●	·
F03 Profile + Time Sanctity Sacred Time Blocks · Google Calendar automation · structural prioritisation	●	·	·	·	·	·	●	●
F04 Dynamic Reflection 6 formats · written, audio, check-in, walk-and-talk, Claude-powered	·	·	·	●	·	●	●	●
F05 Curated Training Menu Resource library · competency-tagged · peer experience logs	·	·	·	·	●	●	·	●
F06 Coach Dashboard Shared prep space · two-way coachee-coach visibility	●	·	·	●	·	●	●	·
F07 Feedback & Insight Tool Feedback repository · reflection synthesis · developmental overview	·	·	●	●	·	·	●	●
F08 Micro-Actions Daily 15-min tasks · competency-linked · stealth tracking	●	●	·	·	·	●	●	●

Table 5: Feature-to-requirement coverage matrix. Each system feature is mapped against the five design requirements (R1–R5) and three research questions (RQ1–RQ3). ● indicates the primary requirement addressed by that feature. Features addressing multiple requirements reflect the system's integrated architecture rather than isolated solutions.

Conclusion & recommendations

- 11.1 Answering the Research Questions
- 11.2 Requirements Verification Matrix
- 11.3 Concluding Synthesis
- 11.4 recommendation for future pd - implementation plan and sustainability

11

This chapter marks the close of the Double Diamond and the academic conclusion of this graduation project. Its objective is threefold: to demonstrate how the finalised system answers the research questions that have structured this project from the outset; to verify that the five design requirements established in Chapter 6 are addressed by the features of the final system; and to provide a concrete implementation plan that ensures the validated design can survive and evolve within the organisational reality of Essense and Eidra. Together, these three sections move from academic closure to practical handover — confirming not only that a valid answer has been found, but that it is one the organisation can act on.

11.1 Answering the Research Questions

RQ1: What are the professional growth desires of Essense employees and requirements from Essense and Eidra in personal development that need to be met?

The professional growth desires of Essense employees were established through the interview analysis (Section 5.2.7) and confirmed through the co-creation session (Chapter 7). The dominant desires converge on five themes: continuous structural support rather than periodic check-ins; assistance in breaking down high-level YER ambitions into concrete, actionable steps; frictionless integration of PD into daily workflows; access to concrete examples of training directions and pathways; and structured reflection as a supported, continuous component of development rather than an individual initiative left to the spaces between formal review moments [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes]. Underlying all five desires is a consistent tension that runs through the entire dataset — employees simultaneously desire structure and freedom. They want guidance without losing ownership over their own development. This tension is not a contradiction to be resolved but a design parameter to be held: the final system addresses it by providing scaffolding that can be used selectively and switched off entirely, preserving the autonomy that employees value while making structured support available to those who need it [Reflective Motivation – Intentions; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

The organisational requirements of Essense and Eidra were established through the document analysis (Section 5.1). These cover the Eidra Foundation pillars, the four operational loops — goal-setting, tracking, reflection, and training — and the overarching demands for system synergy, clarity, and autonomy. Both the employee desires and the organisational requirements were validated with representatives from Essense and Eidra, confirming that the identified focus adequately addresses this research question.

RQ2: What are the current drivers and barriers for Essense employees to actively work on personal development?

The drivers and barriers were the primary focus of the interview analysis (Section 5.2) and are documented in full there. The diagnostic conclusion reached in Section 5.2 — and confirmed as the strategic foundation of the entire design response — is that the root cause of PD dissatisfaction at Essense is not a deficit in Capability or intrinsic Motivation. All eight employees interviewed hold a strong growth mindset and a genuine desire to develop. The failure is structural: a systematic deficit in Opportunity and Automatic Motivation that makes sustained personal development architecturally impossible within the current system, regardless of individual intent [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement]. The three primary barriers — the Blank Page Problem, To-Do Fatigue, and the Reinforcement Void — each operate at the level of environmental conditions rather than individual willingness. The absence of structured reflection compounds all three: without it, employees cannot develop the self-knowledge needed to set meaningful goals, assess progress, or identify next steps [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes].

The primary drivers — a collective growth mindset, high psychological safety, and the tacit seniority capital of senior employees — confirm that the organisation possesses the motivational foundation for a PD system to succeed, provided the structural conditions are put in place to support it. The design response developed in this project is grounded in precisely that logic: it does not attempt to generate motivation from scratch, but to create the environmental architecture within which existing motivation can be sustained [Reflective Motivation – Optimism; Beliefs about Capabilities].

RQ3: What format of personal development deliverable best ensures long-term engagement and adaptivity within Essense's fast-paced, evolving creative environment?

The answer to this question was not available at the outset of the project — it required the full arc of the second diamond to establish. The co-creation session (Chapter 7) generated a validated possibility space. The Harris profile evaluation (Chapter 8) identified the Seamless Digital Agent as the most viable concept direction, on the basis of its system synergy and its capacity to reduce cognitive load without imposing additional administrative friction. The hybrid concept — integrating the structural scaffolding of the Guided Career Architect to resolve the Blank Page Problem — was selected as the final direction. The prototype and user testing (Chapter 9) translated this direction into a testable system and generated empirical evidence of its validity in practice.

The format that best ensures long-term engagement and adaptivity is therefore an AI-mediated, platform-integrated system that operates across Notion, Google Calendar, and Claude — reducing the cognitive cost of PD engagement to the point where routine tracking and reflection can be absorbed into System 1 interactions, while preserving System 2 capacity for the genuinely developmental tasks that require it. Reflection is embedded as a continuous, low-friction feature across multiple functions of the system — from dynamic reflection formats grounded in positive psychology to the feedback insight tool that converts accumulated input into actionable growth directions — ensuring that experience is converted into self-knowledge rather than simply accumulating [Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Reflective Motivation – Optimism]. Critically, the adaptivity requirement — the demand that the system evolve alongside the organisation over time — is addressed not by a static feature set but by the architectural choice of Claude as the connective intelligence layer: the system can be updated and extended by internal administrators using the prompt and installation guide provided at handover, ensuring that it does not suffer the same fate as the previous PD playbook [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

Main Research Question: How can a structured personal development deliverable be designed that balances the needs and wants of Essense employees with the guidelines of Eidra?

The answer to the main research question is the system documented in Chapters 9 and 10. It was developed through a research process in which Essense employees and organisational representatives were involved at every critical decision point: the co-creation session shaped the ideation; the Harris profile evaluation determined the concept direction; the user tests validated the prototype; and the company walk-through confirmed organisational feasibility. The resulting system is not a researcher's interpretation of what employees need — it is a co-constructed, empirically validated response to the specific behavioural barriers and organisational constraints that define the personal development landscape at Essense.

The system balances employee needs and organisational guidelines through its architecture: the Eidra Foundation pillars and the four operational loops (Section 5.1) are embedded into the system's structure, while the employee's autonomy over how, when, and at what ambition level they engage with that structure is preserved throughout. The tension between the agile Essense culture and the more robust Eidra framework — identified in Section 2.5 as the core architectural contradiction of the design brief — is resolved by a system flexible enough to serve both without compromising either. Goal-setting, tracking, reflection, and training are each addressed by dedicated features that work in combination rather than in isolation, ensuring that the system functions as a coherent developmental backbone rather than a collection of disconnected tools [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement].

11.2 Requirements Verification Matrix

To verify that the finalised deliverable explicitly addresses the main research question, the following matrix maps the specific features of the final system against the five design requirements. The verification status reflects the empirical evidence generated through the user testing described in Section 9.4.

Requirement	System Feature(s)	Verification Status
Requirement 1: Continuous, Sustainable Activity	Central PD Backbone (SSOT); Time Sanctity Automation (Calendar Sanctity); Micro-Actions with stealth tracking; Coach Dashboard	Partially verified. Calendar Sanctity was well-received across all four participants — three of four indicated they would activate it — and the stealth tracking logic was recognised as reducing administrative burden in line with the requirement's intent. The primary limitation was orientation: participants without an existing PD practice could not independently locate the system's entry point, resolved in the final iteration through a three-step onboarding flow (Section 9.5). The coach dashboard could not be fully tested under live conditions pending the Eidra integration token and activation of the coaching model; its verification against this requirement is conditional on organisational deployment. Average orientation score: 3.75/5.
Requirement 2: Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions	Goal Deconstruction tool (SMART-structured sub-goal generation); Goal overview linked to career framework pillars; Micro-Actions (daily task translation)	Verified. The goal deconstruction feature was the highest-scoring section across all four participants, averaging 4.25. Participants across all seniority levels identified it as directly resolving a real difficulty — the inability to translate annual ambitions into concrete steps was named unprompted by two participants as the exact problem they currently face. The navigational friction identified in testing — difficulty locating generated sub-goals after approval — was resolved in the final iteration by integrating the breakdown tool as a fold-out accordion within the goals page (Section 9.5).
Requirement 3: Active Tracking	Growth at a Glance dashboard; Stealth tracking via micro-actions; Time Budget Overview; Automatic reflection and action storage	Partially verified. The stealth tracking mechanism was functionally recognised across testing as resolving the administrative burden that makes manual tracking unsustainable. The dashboard overview averaged 3.5 across participants; the score spread is traceable to information density rather than a tracking concept failure. The architectural consolidation and progressive disclosure implemented in the final iteration (Section 9.5) directly address this friction. Full verification against cross-device and multi-user tracking is conditional on the shared database implementation identified in Section 10.5.
Requirement 4: Active Reflection	Dynamic Reflection Formats (six formats, positive psychology basis); Feedback and Reflection Insight Tool; Coach session preparation; Automated reflection storage feeding developmental overview	Partially verified. Reflection features averaged 3.63 across participants. The insights synthesis tool was identified as the most valuable single element of the system — several participants stated it would change how they approached coaching conversations. The primary friction was a prototype-level implementation error in the reflection submission flow, resolved in the final iteration (Section 9.5), alongside integration of audio reflection into the insights synthesis pipeline. The requirement is verified in concept and in the final iterated system; the prototype-state score reflects implementation gaps that have since been closed.
Requirement 5: Concrete Suggestions and Examples	Curated Training Menu (smart suggestion mode and browse mode); Peer Experience Logs; AI-assisted resource discovery linked to active goals	Partially verified. The training and coaching section averaged 3.75 across participants. Smart suggestion mode, external search, and peer rating were each identified as genuinely useful by three of four participants. Friction points — constrained Notion display width and ambiguity around coach data sharing — were resolved in the final iteration (Section 9.5), including explicit privacy indicators in the coaching interface and a functional goal-matched search. The training menu concept is empirically supported; the coaching component requires live deployment and active coaching relationships before full verification is possible.

What this project set out to resolve was not a tool gap — Essense does not lack platforms, frameworks, or stated intentions around personal development. What it lacked was the connective architecture to make those intentions sustainable in the face of the structural conditions that define agency life: high workload, shifting project allocations, and the consistent depletion of the cognitive reserves that personal development requires. The Blank Page Problem and To-Do Fatigue are not individual failures; they are predictable outcomes of a system that places the full cognitive burden of PD on the employee without providing the environmental scaffolding to support it.

The system developed in this project addresses that gap at the level of architecture rather than attitude. It does not ask employees to try harder or prioritise differently — it redesigns the conditions under which they make decisions about their development, so that the path of least resistance leads toward growth rather than away from it. Routine tracking becomes a 30-second interaction. Reflection becomes a choice of format rather than a confrontation with a blank text field. Goal-setting becomes a guided deconstruction rather than a solo exercise in ambition management. Sacred time is blocked before client pressure can crowd it out.

The result is a system that provides a Single Source of Truth for personal development — one that is continuous, structured, and adapted to the specific cultural and operational realities of a fast-paced creative agency navigating the complexity of integration into a larger collective. Whether it succeeds in the long term depends on factors beyond any single design intervention: the activation of the coaching model, the alignment of the onboarding process, and the ongoing commitment of organisational leadership to treating personal development as a structural priority rather than an individual responsibility. Those dependencies are documented in the implementation plan that follows. What this project can confirm is that the system provides the foundation on which those commitments can be built.

11.4 recommendation for future pd - implementation plan and sustainability

The following section outlines the concrete steps, dependencies, and governance conditions required to ensure that the validated system transitions successfully from prototype to operational reality within Essense and Eidra.

Starting Point: The system is built as a fully integrated Notion environment, aligned with the architecture and guidelines of both Essense and Eidra. It can be implemented as soon as the organisation is ready to do so; no additional technical build is required beyond the database launch described in the prompt and installation guide provided at handover.

The Coaching Model Dependency: The technical architecture of the system is operational, but its human infrastructure faces a distinct starting condition. The coaching model has been introduced within Essense but is not yet active. The coach dashboard (Section 9.2.3.6) is architecturally complete but cannot function as intended until coaching relationships are formally established. When the coaching model is activated, a refinement pass on the coach and coachee features is recommended to ensure full alignment with however the coaching structure has been operationalised in practice.

Coach-Coachee Matching: A concrete recommendation for when the coaching model is activated is to introduce a structured matching process informed by a validated personality or working-style framework. As established in Section 5.2.7, employees explicitly desire coaching relationships founded on personality compatibility rather than purely on seniority or functional proximity — the reasoning being that psychological safety within the coaching relationship is a prerequisite for the kind of honest, constructive feedback that drives genuine growth (Edmondson, 1999). This could be achieved through a brief self-assessment completed during onboarding that generates a compatibility profile used to guide coach assignment. The specific framework used is a secondary decision; what matters is that the match is made on an explicit, structured basis rather than by default or convenience. This recommendation is technically feasible within the existing system architecture: the onboarding profile feature (Section 9.2.3.1) could be extended to capture the relevant input, and the coach dashboard could surface compatibility information alongside developmental data [Social Opportunity – Social Influences; Reflective Motivation – Optimism; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

Project Allocation Integration: In an ideal system architecture, an employee's active development goals would be visible to — and informable by — the projects they are currently assigned to, creating a direct feedback loop between the work being done and the skills being developed. A designer working on a service blueprinting project, for instance, could have that allocation surfaced as a live development opportunity rather than treated as entirely separate from their PD trajectory.

This integration was identified as desirable during the research phase but could not be pursued within the scope of this project due to the logistical complexity of connecting the PD system to the project allocation infrastructure of Essense and Eidra.

As a future development, investigating the technical feasibility of a bi-directional link between the PD system and the project allocation environment — potentially through the Claude connector architecture already underpinning the system — is strongly recommended. If achievable, this would represent a meaningful step toward making personal development genuinely embedded in daily work rather than running alongside it [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement; TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity].

Ecosystem Independence — PeopleVue and Eidra Systems: The personal development system operates independently of PeopleVue and other backend Eidra platforms. This independence eliminates technical integration friction at launch, but represents a boundary condition that will need to be resolved as the Eidra digital infrastructure matures. Future alignment between the PD system and the broader Eidra data ecosystem is recommended and technically feasible via the Claude connector architecture; the prompt and installation guide provides the foundation for this integration when the organisation is ready.

Onboarding Disconnect: The interview analysis, document analysis, and co-creation session all identified the onboarding process as a critical entry point for the PD system — the moment at which employees should first encounter its existence, logic, and expectations. At the time of this project, the onboarding process at Essense was under revision and could not be aligned with the new system. Integrating the PD system into the redesigned onboarding process is the single highest-priority recommendation for implementation: without this entry point, new employees will encounter the system late, without context, and without the foundational understanding of how it relates to their development trajectory [Psychological Capability – Knowledge; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context].

Governance and Long-Term Ownership: The personal development overhaul was initiated by Kim, driven by the goal of improving employee satisfaction regarding PD (Section 2.1). Following Kim's temporary departure from the organisation, long-term accountability and implementation responsibility shifted to a new organisational lead, who has received a comprehensive explanation of the system, the installation guide, and the Claude architecture that underpins it. Upon Kim's return, accountability for the system's content, governance, and ongoing development is expected to transfer back to her — ensuring continuity of vision and preventing the drift that occurs when ownership is unclear or distributed by default rather than by design.

The technical governance of the system operates on a parallel track. Wouter, who is responsible for integrating Claude into Essense's existing systems, holds governance over the integration layer and the technical backend that underpins the PD system.

This division of responsibility — content and developmental governance with Kim, technical and integration governance with Wouter — is a structural strength, as it ensures that both dimensions of the system have a dedicated owner. However, for this division to function effectively in practice, it must be made explicit and formally documented at the point of handover: ambiguity about where content decisions end and technical decisions begin is a known governance failure mode, and one that is particularly consequential for a system whose value depends on the coherent co-evolution of both layers [Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation].

For the system to remain sustainable beyond the project handover, three governance commitments are therefore recommended: ownership of both the content and technical layers should be formally assigned and documented; the installation guide should be treated as a living document updated as the ecosystem evolves; and a joint review moment between Kim and Wouter should be scheduled at the six-month mark to assess whether the system is functioning as intended, whether the content remains aligned with organisational priorities, and whether any technical refinements are required. Without this joint stewardship, even a well-validated system risks fragmentation over time.

Adaptability: A comprehensive prompt and installation guide is provided directly to Essense at handover. This guide functions as a blueprint that can be adjusted as the organisational ecosystem evolves — whether through changes to the onboarding process, activation of the coaching model, or integration with PeopleVue. Internal administrators can use this guide to execute adjustments over time, ensuring the system remains adaptive and that its long-term viability is not contingent on the continued involvement of its original designer.

Broader Scalability: For organisations within the broader Eidra collective that wish to adopt the system, the intervention logic is transferable — the behavioural design principles of reducing cognitive friction, protecting developmental time, and embedding PD into existing workflows apply across organisational contexts. However, the specific implementation would require rearchitecting to fit the native tool ecosystem of the organisation in question, as discussed in Section 12.1.2. The limitations of direct scalability without adaptation are addressed in full in Section 12.2.

Discussion

12.1 Theoretical Relevance & Broader Applicability

12.2 Limitations of the study & design

12.3 suggestions for future research

12

The preceding chapters have systematically documented the research and design process underlying this project, from the identification of behavioral barriers to the iterative development and validation of the final system. This discussion chapter transitions from process documentation to critical reflection, evaluating the project's findings against the theoretical frameworks established in Chapter 4, addressing the boundaries of both the study and the resulting design, and identifying the most viable future directions for future research.

Three sections structure this chapter. Section 12.1 examines the degree to which the empirical findings relate to the COM-B model, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory, and considers the broader applicability of the intervention logic beyond the specific context of Essense. Section 12.2 addresses the honest limitations of the research process and the design itself. Section 12.3 identifies the questions left unresolved by this project and proposes directions for future research that build directly on what has been established here.

12.1 Theoretical Relevance & Broader Applicability

Theoretical relevance

The empirical findings of this study do not merely describe the personal development landscape at Essense — they illustrate a behavioural dynamic that is broadly documented in the academic literature yet infrequently operationalised in a coherent design intervention within a creative consultancy context.

Reflecting on the findings through the theoretical lenses established in Chapter 4, it becomes clear that the COM-B model, the Theoretical Domains Framework, and Dual Process Theory did not simply structure the research; they were validated and extended by it.

The most significant theoretical contribution of this project concerns the diagnostic conclusion reached in Section 5.2: the primary friction in personal development at Essense does not originate in a deficit of Capability or intrinsic motivation, but in a systematic failure of Opportunity and Automatic Motivation. This finding directly aligns with the broader behavioral science literature, which consistently demonstrates that even where individuals hold strong developmental intent, structural environmental barriers are sufficient to prevent sustained behavior change (Cane et al., 2012; Michie et al., 2011). What this project contributes beyond the existing literature is a concrete, context-specific case study of how this mechanism operates within a fast-paced creative consultancy — a setting that has received considerably less attention in the HRM and behavioral design literature than corporate or manufacturing environments.

The application of Dual Process Theory proved particularly useful in translating this diagnostic conclusion into a design principle. As established in Chapter 4, System 2 cognitive processing — the deliberate, effortful mode required for reflection and strategic goal-setting — is a finite resource (Sloman, 1996). The field research demonstrated that intense client workloads consistently depleted employees' System 2 reserves, triggering a regression to habitual System 1 loops centred on billable project work. This is not a motivational failure; it is a structural energy depletion problem. The strategic design response to this finding was therefore not to demand more effort from employees, but to redesign the system to reduce cognitive load: routine tracking and documentation are absorbed into low-effort System 1 interactions, while System 2 capacity is preserved for the genuinely reflective and developmental tasks that require it.

This contribution extends Dual Process Theory beyond its conventional diagnostic application, demonstrating how the distinction between the two systems can function as an active design principle within a corporate PD context — not only identifying where the problem lies, but directly informing how the intervention should be structured.

A further contribution concerns the role of AI within the intervention. The existing literature on personal development and behavioural intervention has not yet substantively engaged with the possibilities introduced by agentic AI systems. This project positions AI not as a content delivery tool but as the connective architecture of the intervention itself: the system links the tool ecosystem, deconstructs ambition into action, and adapts over time without continuous manual maintenance. This application of agentic AI as behavioural scaffolding within a corporate PD context represents a contribution that, while not claimed as entirely unprecedented in the broader field, has not to the researcher's knowledge been documented within the design research literature in this specific combination of context, framework, and implementation logic. It should be emphasised that this claim is advanced as a design and methodological contribution rather than an empirically validated outcome; the present study demonstrates and rationalises the approach but does not establish its long-term efficacy through controlled comparison — a gap that is addressed in Section 12.3.

This contribution is particularly relevant in the specific organisational context in which it operates. As established in Section 1.1, creative consultancies must implement newly arising trends to remain competitive in a fast-moving environment. An intervention founded on a static toolset would risk leaving the company behind in precisely the context it is designed to serve. An AI-based architecture is, in principle, capable of evolving alongside the organisation's shifting needs and the broader technological landscape, allowing the system to be updated and extended even in the absence of its original designer. This adaptive capacity directly addresses the requirement for long-term engagement and adaptivity articulated in RQ3.

The three contributions outlined above — the extension of Dual Process Theory into a design principle, the positioning of agentic AI as behavioural scaffolding, and the operationalisation of COM-B and TDF into a transferable intervention blueprint — converge at a point in the academic field that has not previously been occupied in this specific combination (Figure 44). This convergence is not incidental: it reflects the deliberate integration of three bodies of literature — behavioural science, strategic design research, and HRM — each of which the existing literature has tended to treat in relative isolation.

Broader Applicability

Regarding the broader applicability of the research, an important distinction must be drawn between the intervention logic of this project and the specific system architecture through which it is delivered.

The behavioral logic — lowering environmental friction, protecting cognitive bandwidth, and embedding PD into habitual workflows — is transferable. The specific ecosystem on which the system is built is not.

The ^{7.4}'Invisible Agent' is architected around Notion as a single source of truth, Google Calendar for time sanctity automation, and Claude as the connective intelligence layer. This configuration was chosen on the basis of the specific tool ecosystem already in use at Essense and Eidra, and represents a context-specific implementation decision rather than a universal design requirement. An organisation operating on a different tool stack would need to rearchitect the system partly, even while applying the same underlying behavioural principles. Confusing the underlying logic with the overall structure will lead to overstating its capabilities: what generalises is the diagnostic framework and the design rationale, not the technical implementation per se.

With that distinction established, the intervention logic itself is broadly applicable. Any organisation characterised by high workloads, creative environments, and project-based team structures is likely to encounter a structurally similar pattern of PD neglect. This includes professional service firms across a wide range of sectors — architecture practices, marketing agencies, management consultancies, and technology studios among them. The COM-B and TDF frameworks applied here are explicitly designed to be scalable and transferable across organisational sizes and industries (Cane et al., 2012), and the core design logic of this project represents a generalisable blueprint for behavioural intervention in high-workload environments, provided it is re-implemented within the native tool ecosystem of the organisation in question.

One further contextual boundary must be acknowledged. The Essense findings are shaped by an organisational baseline that cannot be assumed universally: all eight interview participants held a growth mindset, which, as the literature confirms, is closely associated with creative professional identities (Karwowski, 2017). In organisations where a fixed mindset is more prevalent, the intervention logic would require a greater focus at the level of Reflective Motivation, as the current system design assumes a readiness to engage with development that may not be universally present. This is not a weakness of the design — it is a boundary condition that future research should address directly, as discussed in Section 12.3.

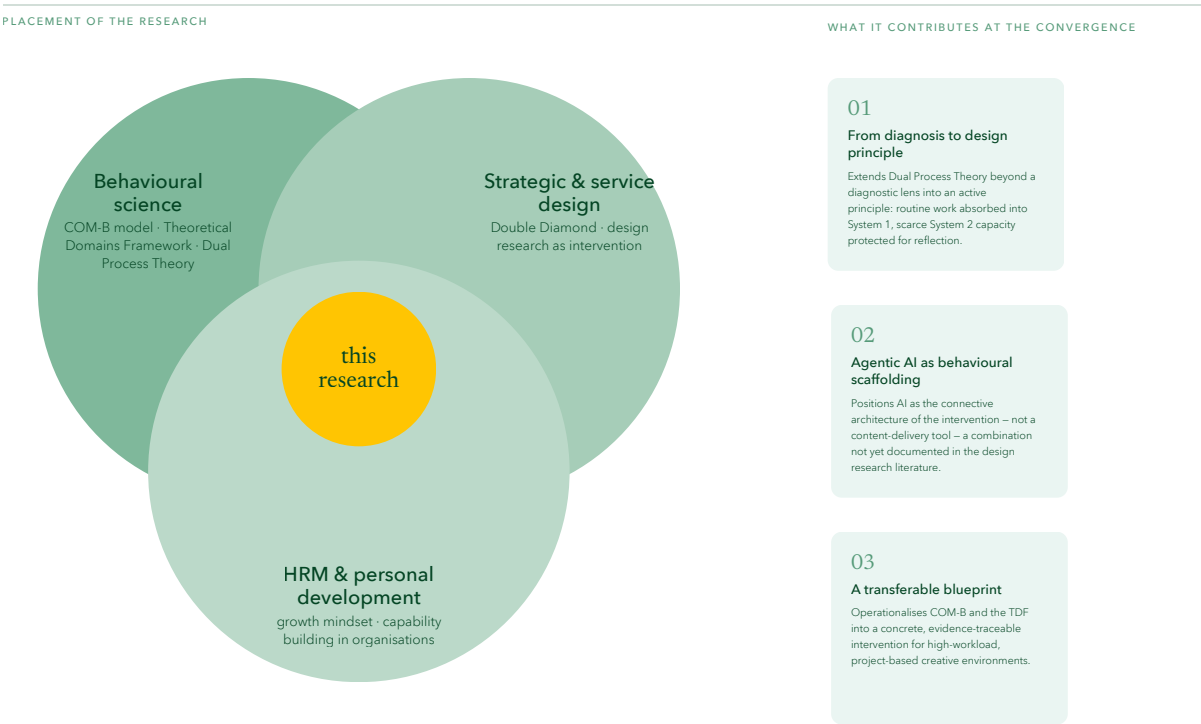


Figure 44: The positioning of this research in the academic field and its contribution to it.

12.2 Limitations of the study & design

In this section the constraints of both the research process and the resulting design are addressed. The core tension running through this process is one that is inherent to the scoping of design research: every strategic choice to include something is simultaneously a choice to exclude something else, and those exclusions have consequences that are stated in this section.

Regarding the research process, the most significant boundary is the 100-day project timeline. The multi-stage methodological funnel described in Section 5.3 was designed to be rigorous and repeatable, but the requirement to narrow from over 40 initial findings to five design requirements means that several potentially influential factors were not carried forward into the design phase. The topic of personal development is broad and complex, and the full picture of what drives or holds back PD within Essense extends beyond what the final system addresses. Furthermore, not all requirements that fell outside the final focus were insignificant — some narrowly missed the cut based on source triangulation criteria rather than on low relevance. This is not a methodological failure, but it is a boundary that limits the comprehensiveness of the intervention.

A second research limitation concerns the timing of the project relative to Essense's organisational transition. At the time of fieldwork, the integration of Essense into the Eidra collective was still actively unfolding: new systems were being introduced, the coaching model was not yet operational, and the onboarding process was under revision. This created genuine ambiguity around the boundaries of the design brief, and some of the systems with which the PD system must eventually align were not yet sufficiently implemented to be integrated into the design. Furthermore, the organisational ask for the personal development system was still being defined at the time of the project, which meant the scope of the graduation brief remained fluid for an extended period — creating a sustained uncertainty around what the project should prioritise and where its boundaries lay.

The research therefore captures an organisation in the midst of system transition — which reflects a critical organisational moment, but also a constraint, as the system is calibrated to a context that continues to evolve and blurs the boundaries of the project.

Turning to the design itself, the primary limitation is a direct mirror of its central strength. The system is explicitly optimised for the dominant barrier identified in the field research: the collision between environmental opportunity failure and cognitive overload, referred to throughout this report as To-Do Fatigue. For employees whose primary barrier falls elsewhere on the COM-B spectrum — for instance, a deficit in Psychological Capability such as the inability to construct a yearly goal — the effort-reduction architecture of the system may be insufficient as a standalone solution. A related tension exists within the system's own ambition: a design whose central purpose is to reduce cognitive load must be especially careful not to reintroduce it through the volume or complexity of its own features.

This tension surfaced directly in the user tests: the dominant finding across all four participants was information overload. The architectural response — progressive disclosure, a simplified default view, and collapsible panels — addresses this at the level of interface, but the finding also points to a deeper strategic principle: a behaviourally-grounded system is strongest when it resolves the core barrier completely for the majority of users, and treats lower-frequency needs as optional, surfaced-on-demand modules rather than co-equal features competing for attention from the first interaction. This is the direction the system's next development phase should pursue.

Furthermore, the system addresses several barriers partially — such as the inability to deconstruct high-level ambitions, or a fragmented Reflective Motivation disconnected from formal reward structures — through the goal deconstruction feature and the structured training menu, but it was not designed to inhabit the full spectrum of individual behavioural profiles without further development .

A further design limitation concerns two specific system dependencies that remain unresolved at the point of handover. First, the coaching feature developed in Section 9.2.3.6 is architecturally contingent on an operational coaching model within Essense — a model that has been introduced but is not yet active. Until the coaching structure is fully implemented, this feature cannot function as intended, representing a gap between the system's designed capability and its current operational reality. Second, the system operates independently of PeopleVue, the HR platform introduced within the broader Eidra infrastructure. While this independence eliminates technical integration friction in the short term, it also means the system does not yet align with the broader Eidra data ecosystem — a limitation that will need to be resolved as the collective's digital infrastructure matures.

12.2 Limitations of the study & design

Additionally, the system is currently bound to the Notion and Google Calendar ecosystem. This was a deliberate and evidence-based architectural choice — system synergy was identified as a non-negotiable constraint in Section 5.1.2 — but it introduces a dependency that limits the system's transferability. Should Essense or Eidra migrate to a different tool stack, the implementation would require significant rearchitecting, even as the underlying design logic and behavioural rationale would remain valid

A third design-level dependency concerns the activation of the system's AI intelligence layer. The system is built around five AI-powered features — talk-it-through reflection, photo-to-goals extraction, sub-goal generation, insights synthesis, and training resource search — all of which are routed through the Anthropic Claude API via a Vercel serverless function. Audio transcription operates through a parallel function connected to the OpenAI Whisper API. Neither of these connections was activated during this project: the infrastructure is fully in place and the integration is documented in the handover guide, but the decision to activate these features — and to carry the associated operational cost — rests with Essense and Eidra rather than with the researcher.

This is a deliberate and appropriate boundary. The AI features are not essential to the system's core functionality: all five fall back gracefully to scripted or rule-based alternatives when the API is unavailable, ensuring the system remains fully navigable without them. The system was therefore designed with two operational modes: a no-AI version, which requires no external accounts or ongoing cost, and an AI-enabled version, which requires the addition of an ANTHROPIC_API_KEY — and, for audio, an OPENAI_API_KEY — to the Vercel environment. The practical and financial implications of this choice are documented in full in the integration setup guide provided at handover. For an organisation of fifty employees using the system as a periodic personal development tool rather than a continuous software application, the realistic cost of enabling AI features falls in the range of tens of euros per month — a figure that will decrease further if the less expensive model variant is selected, as the guide specifies.

The consequence for this project is that the AI features were validated at the architectural and prototype level — their logic, interface behaviour, and fallback design were confirmed through user testing — but were not validated under live API conditions. This represents a testing boundary rather than a design gap: the AI integration is structurally sound and has been reviewed against the API documentation, but its real-world performance in the specific context of Essense employees remains to be confirmed in the first deployment cycle.

A methodological reflection on the use of AI-assisted tools across the research process is warranted. Throughout this project, AI tools were employed at several stages — including synthesis support in the co-creation analysis (Section 7.3.3) and layout generation in the concept presentation phase (Section 8.2). In all instances, the role of AI was deliberately bounded: it was used to accelerate non-decision tasks — the organisation of high-volume data, the formatting of structured outputs — and was not used to make analytical or design decisions. Every AI-generated output was reviewed, adjusted, and validated against the underlying source material before being carried forward. Nevertheless, the use of AI-assisted synthesis introduces a methodological risk that must be acknowledged: the risk of anchoring. When AI produces a structured output — even a preliminary one — the researcher's subsequent judgment may be subtly shaped by the framing that output introduces, even when the output is critically reviewed. This is a known limitation of AI-assisted qualitative synthesis, and while the steps taken in this project — particularly the member-check validation in the co-creation and the cross-comparison in the interview analysis — were designed to counteract this, it cannot be fully ruled out as a source of interpretive influence on the final findings.

A last found limitation concerns the measurability of the system's primary success criterion. This project was initiated on the basis of dissatisfaction identified through a recurring internal survey conducted within Essense. That survey no longer takes place; the transition into the Eidra collective has introduced a broader satisfaction instrument at the collective level, but this does not include a targeted measurement of personal development satisfaction. As a result, the quantitative benchmark established in Section 5.1.2 — a satisfaction score of at least 7.5 — cannot currently be tracked against a consistent measurement instrument. The absence of this baseline measurement does not undermine the validity of the design, but it means that the system's primary success criterion cannot be verified through the same instrument that originally identified the problem. This reinforces the recommendation in Section 12.3 for a longitudinal follow-up study, and also points toward a practical action for Essense: reinstating a targeted PD satisfaction measurement — even as a lightweight addition to the existing Eidra survey — would make the system's impact traceable over time.

12.3 suggestions for future research

The limitations outlined in Section 12.2 are not merely constraints to be acknowledged — they define the most critical directions for future investigation. Five areas emerge as particularly fruitful, each building directly on what this project has established, and a fourth is identified as a practical boundary question with implications for the system's scalability.

The most immediate priority is a longitudinal study of the system's behavioural effects. The user testing conducted in Section 9.4 validated the intervention at prototype level, confirming that the design reduces perceived friction and lowers the cognitive barrier to engagement. What it cannot yet demonstrate is whether these effects sustain over time — whether the reduction in To-Do Fatigue translates into measurable behavioural change across a full year of use, including the high-pressure periods surrounding large client deliverables. A six- to twelve-month follow-up study, using the COM-B model as the evaluative framework and the satisfaction metric established in Section 5.1.2 (a target score of 7.5) as the quantitative benchmark, would provide the empirical basis for confirming the system's long-term viability.

A second direction for future research concerns the social dimension of personal development, which was deliberately scoped out of the final system but consistently surfaced as meaningful throughout the research process. The Harris profile discussion (Section 8.3.1) pointed toward social accountability and learning-by-example as powerful motivational levers — levers that Concept 1 captured but could not sustain as an independent system. Future research could investigate how peer learning structures, such as a formalised shared learning repository or a structured accountability partnership, can be layered on top of the current effort-reduction architecture without reintroducing the operational complexity that rendered Concept 1 unviable. The hypothesis is that a social layer, built on top of an already-functioning behavioural backbone, could amplify the system's motivational reach while preserving its system synergy.

A third direction concerns the question of scalability within the Eidra collective. This project has produced a system calibrated to Essense's specific culture, team size, and operational rhythm. Eidra encompasses 150 partners across diverse organisational contexts, and it is not established whether the behavioural assumptions underpinning this design — particularly the growth mindset baseline and the high degree of psychological safety — are equally present across the broader collective. Research into how the system's architecture would need to adapt for organisations with different cultural profiles, seniority distributions, or tool ecosystems would substantially extend the contribution of this project and directly address Eidra's stated goal of orchestrating common capabilities across its partner network.

A fourth direction concerns the technical transferability of the system across different organisational tool architectures. As established in Section 12.1.2, the intervention logic of this project generalises, but the specific implementation does not. Future research should investigate how the behavioural design principles operationalised here can be re-implemented within alternative tool stacks — for instance, environments built on Microsoft 365 or proprietary HR platforms — and whether the same reduction in cognitive friction can be achieved without the specific connector architecture that Claude provides in the current implementation. This would extend the practical reach of the intervention and also test which features of the current architecture are genuinely essential to its behavioural effectiveness and which are context-specific implementation choices — a query that the present study cannot resolve on its own.

A fifth practical direction concerns the reinstatement of a targeted personal development measurement instrument. As noted in Section 12.2, the survey through which PD dissatisfaction was originally identified at Essense no longer operates, and the broader Eidra satisfaction survey does not include a PD-specific component. This creates a measurement gap that extends beyond this project: without a consistent instrument, neither the impact of this system nor the effectiveness of any future PD intervention can be tracked against the baseline that originally defined the problem. Future research — or more precisely, a practical organisational action — should investigate what a lightweight, recurring PD satisfaction measurement would look like within the existing Eidra survey infrastructure. The question is not whether to measure, but how to do so in a way that is sufficiently targeted to capture PD-specific satisfaction without adding survey burden that employees are unlikely to sustain. The benchmark established in Section 5.1.2 — a satisfaction score of at least 7.5 — provides a ready-made starting point for this instrument, and its reinstatement would close the measurement loop that this project opened but could not, under current conditions, close.

Conclusion & recommendations

13.1. Reflection on Practice (The "Design Trade" Lens)

13.2 Reflection on Personal Learnings (The "Growth" Lens)

13

This chapter closes the thesis with two distinct but connected forms of reflection. Rather than revisiting the findings or restating the design outcomes — the objective here is to step back from the project as a whole and examine what it produced beyond the deliverable itself; what it revealed about the practice of strategic design in a live organisational context, and what it demanded and developed on a personal level. These two lenses are addressed in Sections 13.1 and 13.2.

13.1 Reflection on Practice (The "Design Trade" Lens)

Strategic design promises the integration of rigorous analytical thinking with creative problem-solving — a synthesis of structure and intuition that is considerably easier to describe within an educational setting than to enact within the constraints of a live organisation. This project tested that promise directly, and the friction between the two proved to be where the most valuable learning was found.

The most significant practical learning concerned the management of ambiguity, not as a temporary obstacle to be cleared but as a permanent condition to be designed within. As established in Section 12.2, the boundaries of this project remained fluid for an extended period; the organisational ask was still being defined, surrounding systems were mid-implementation, and the ongoing transition into Eidra continued to shift the ecosystem that I needed to design for. Early in the process, ambiguity was noted as a constraint — something blocking the clarity I assumed I needed before I could act. What became clear over time is that the capacity to commit to a strategic direction without waiting for complete certainty is a core competence of the strategic designer. The Double Diamond provided the structural scaffolding, yet the judgment calls within it fell to me, and learning to make them under uncertainty was the discipline that this project developed most.

A significant part of the practical learning concerned flexibility — the capacity to adjust to unexpected outcomes and to commit to directions that were not of my own preference. A live organisational project does not unfold according to the designer's plan; findings emerge that redirect the work, stakeholder priorities reshape the brief, and the evidence frequently points toward a solution other than the one I would instinctively have chosen. The clearest instance of this was the system architecture: my own preference leaned toward the usage of Miro, yet the changing ecosystem and the need for AI integration — confirmed by both the research findings and the system synergy constraint — pointed clearly in a different direction. Learning to follow the evidence rather than my preference — to let the research, the users, and the organisational constraints lead the design rather than my own creative instinct — was among the most important practical learnings of this project.

Secondly, working with AI as a building and prototyping tool introduced a more unexpected dimension of practice. Within this project, Claude functioned not as a passive productivity aid but as an active collaborator in the construction of the system architecture, which demanded a new working discipline: precise specification, iterative instruction, and the capacity to hold a clear vision of the intended outcome while remaining flexible about the means of reaching it. Directing an AI system toward a defined design goal — and developing an honest understanding of both its capabilities and its limits — feels increasingly central to the professional landscape that strategic designers are now entering. What this project established, therefore, is not merely a finished system but a practical basis in working with AI as a design medium, a competence acquired through doing rather than through theory.

Returning to the ambitions set at the outset of this project, what stands out is not the distance travelled between start and finish, but the clarity that the journey itself produced. The initial ambitions were broad: to work independently on a complex and relatively open project, to push against my own limits, and to arrive at a clearer understanding of my capabilities and aspirations beyond my studies. With the experience of the project complete, I can move from a broad view to a more specific analysis of how I actually shaped them.

Working independently on a project of this scale, with genuine organisational stakes, proved fundamentally different from the collaborative studio environment that characterises the MSc programme. This caused me to learn and trust in myself and shaped my preferences more clearly.

One of my central personal ambitions was to "exploit my chaos in a structured way" — to learn to work with, rather than against, my own tendency toward broad and generative thinking. Throughout the project I iteratively found a way to deal with this. New and self-made approaches for funnelling and structuring helped me create structure but at the same time relied on the ability to diverge immensely, which created a structured way of narrowing without losing the thread. These self-created approaches became the structural containers that allowed that chaos to become productive rather than paralysing. In learning to build these containers for myself, I achieved precisely what I had hoped for at the start: I learned to work together with myself.

In addition to this, a more specific personal challenge that the midterm evaluation brought into focus: a tendency to hesitate before committing to a strategic choice. Early in the project, I was inclined to keep options open, to gather more evidence, and to defer the moment of decision in the hope that greater certainty would eventually arrive. The feedback I received was direct — that a strategic designer must be willing to take a stance, to state clearly that "my position is X," and to defend that choice on the basis of the reasoning behind it rather than waiting for the data to remove all doubt. Acting on this required a genuine shift in how I worked. Rather than treating decisiveness as something that follows from complete certainty, I learned to treat it as a competence in its own right: the ability to commit to a well-reasoned direction, to own it explicitly, and to stand behind it under questioning. The concept selection and the prioritisation of the final five requirements were the moments where this shift became most tangible, and learning to make those calls with conviction — rather than hedging until the choice was made for me — was one of the most defining areas of personal growth in this project.

Within my chaotic nature also lies the tendency to lose sight of planning, and with it make an adequate estimation on time needed to deliver. I noticed this mainly when planning for one of my least favourite tasks: the academic writing of this thesis. Before the midterm evaluation meeting, I consistently gave precedence to other project-bound activities instead of first focusing on the parts that I knew needed to be given more attention. It was no surprise that the in-between thesis delivered at the midterm moment was not to my satisfaction. This made me realise that I had to revise my approach; to successfully round off this project and deliver a thesis that I actually put all my focus and effort into, rather than to see it as an additional task that I could do at the last moment. To achieve this, I had to reshape my planning; implementing in-between writing moments and active and structured documentation.

A related challenge that ran alongside the planning difficulty was the sheer volume of what was living in my head at any given moment. This project touches on many interconnected layers — behavioural science, organisational culture, design strategy, tool architecture, measurement — and my natural inclination is to think about all of them simultaneously. This produced a kind of productive chaos: many threads being held at once, but without always a clear sense of which to pull first. To manage this, I developed what I came to think of as a 'chaos management approach': systematically externalising my thinking onto paper as it arose, regardless of whether it was ready to be formalised. The act of writing things down — ideas, tensions, unresolved questions — emptied my head enough to allow me to actually work, rather than simply to think about working. In hindsight, this externalisation practice mirrors the very reflective mechanisms I was designing into the system for others: the value of getting things out of your head and into a legible structure is not only behavioural scaffolding for development, it is a prerequisite for focused, productive work.

A tension that surfaced repeatedly — and that I had not anticipated at the outset — was the experience of feeling that I had not done enough. Personal development as a research subject is, in a particular sense, boundless: the deeper the investigation goes, the more dimensions become visible, and the more apparent it becomes that any finite project can only illuminate a portion of the full picture. There were moments, particularly during the synthesis phase and the scoping of the design requirements, where the awareness of what had been left out felt heavier than the satisfaction of what had been included. I found myself questioning whether the five requirements were the right five, whether the concept selection had closed too early, whether the prototype should have gone further. This feeling — of having glimpsed the full complexity of a problem and delivered only a partial response to it — is, I have come to understand, not a flaw. The capacity to make an aimed contribution — and to name its boundaries rather than hiding them — is itself a needed skill for a strategic designer and that is what this project demanded. The system delivered here does not solve personal development at Essence in its entirety. It provides the architectural foundation on which a more complete solution can be built over time. That, I have learned, is all that can be done in a graduation project, and that's perfectly fine.

The tension between pushing hard and recognising my own limits is one that this project surfaced rather than allowing me to avoid. During the prototyping phase in particular, the ambition of the system repeatedly outpaced what was feasible within the 100-day timeline, and the decision to bound the scope — to deliver a not fully adapted system — initially registered as a form of failure. In retrospect, it was nothing of the kind. It was a deliberate strategic decision, and the capacity to name it as such, rather than to experience it as a shortcoming, was itself a measure of how far I had grown over the course of the project.

As for the subject of this thesis — personal development and growth — a short note: several years ago, a course on value in design (Calabretta, 2023) asked me to define the designer I was and the designer I aspired to become. At the time, a meaningful distance separated the two. Reflecting on that exercise now, at the close of this graduation project, I can say with genuine conviction that the distance has closed: I am the kind, creative, and hard-working designer I once hoped to grow into. That this project was built around a subject I care about, within a company I respect, and through methods I believe in, makes it not only the academic crown on my studies that I set out to achieve, but something more personal than that. In the most literal sense, I am doing what I love — and I am proud of the work that proves it.

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appendix

A : Synthesis matrix

B: Interview questions

C: Consent form

D: Synthesis matrix: Aggregated findings

E: Concept posters (AI generated)

G: complete scoring data

H: User test score and observation sheet

I: User test score and observation sheet

#	Author(s) & Year	APA Full Reference	Thematic Topic	Search Term Used	Relevance (High / Med / Low / Excluded)	Reason for Inclusion / Exclusion	RQ(s) Addressed
1	Dweck (2006)	Dweck, C. S. (2006). Mindset: The new psychology of success.	Growth mindset – foundational definition	Growth mindset / fixed mindset	H	Foundational theory for growth mindset; underpins Chapter 4.2	RQ1, RQ2
2	Maslow (1943)	Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological	Self-actualisation & PD motivation	Personal development effects / motivation	H	Self-actualisation links PD directly to intrinsic motivational need	RQ1, RQ2
3	West & Michie (2020)	West, R., & Michie, S. (2020). A brief introduction to the COM-B model	COM-B framework	COM-B / behaviour change	H	Core analytical framework for the thesis; used as primary diagnostic	RQ2
4	Michie et al. (2011)	Michie, S., van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour	Behaviour Change Wheel & COM-B	COM-B / behaviour change wheel	H	Establishes that theory-based interventions are more effective;	RQ2, RQ3
5	Cane et al. (2012)	Cane, J., O'Connor, D., & Michie, S. (2012). Validation of the theoretical	Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF)	TDF / behaviour change / implementation	H	Validation source for the TDF; provides the 14-domain structure	RQ2
6	Kahneman (2011); Sloman (1996)	Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. Farrar, Straus and	Dual Process Theory (System 1 / System 2)	Dual process theory / habit formation	H	Provides the cognitive-processing lens explaining why PD tasks are	RQ2
7	Han et al. (2018)	Han, S. J., Stieha, V., Poitevin, E., & Starnes, T. L. (2018). Growth	Growth mindset in adult / workplace learning	Growth mindset adult learning	H	Systematic review directly connecting growth mindset to	RQ1, RQ2
8	Meylani (2024)	Meylani, R. (2024). Exploring the link between mindset and	Neuroscience & growth mindset	Neuroscience growth mindset / neuroplasticity	H	Connects mindset to neuroplasticity and structural brain	RQ1
9	Davidson (2012)	Davidson, R. J. (2012). The emotional life of your brain.	Neuroscience & emotional regulation	Neuroscience mindset / emotional well-being	H	Supports the neuroplasticity argument; links mindset to	RQ1, RQ2
10	Crum et al. (2013)	Crum, A. J., Salovey, P., & Achor, S. (2013). Rethinking stress: The role	Stress mindset & performance	Mindset stress / neuroscience	H	Empirically demonstrates that mindset (specifically stress	RQ2
11	Blackwell et al. (2007)	Blackwell, L. S., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Dweck, C. S. (2007). Implicit	Growth mindset intervention & achievement	Growth mindset intervention achievement	H	Shows that growth mindset intervention improves outcomes;	RQ2, RQ3
12	Irimie et al. (2012)	Irimie, S. I., Baleanu, V., & Irimie, S. (2012). Adapting through personal	Definition of personal development	Definition personal development	H	Provides a clear, multi-dimensional definition of PD covering self-	RQ1
13	Beier et al. (2025)	Beier, M. E., Saxena, M., Kraiger, K., et al. (2025). Workplace learning	Future of work & lifelong learning	Workplace learning future of work	H	Positions PD and continuous learning as strategic imperatives in	RQ1
14	Basher et al. (2025)	Basher, F., Rahman, B., Rezwana, R., & Ahmed, F. (2025). The effect	Learning culture & employee retention	Organisational learning culture employee retention	H	Links organisational learning culture to retention, engagement,	RQ1, RQ2
15	Fletcher (2019)	Fletcher, L. (2019). How can personal development lead to	PD & job engagement	Personal development job engagement meaningfulness	H	Directly links PD to job engagement via meaningfulness;	RQ1, RQ2
16	Edmondson (1999)	Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning	Psychological safety & learning	Psychological safety learning teams	H	Foundational paper on psychological safety; establishes	RQ2
17	Newman et al. (2017)	Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A	Psychological safety – systematic review	Psychological safety systematic review	H	Comprehensive review mapping antecedents, outcomes, and	RQ2
18	Nikolova et al. (2014/2016)	Nikolova, I., Van Ruysseveldt, J., Van Dam, K., & De Witte, H. (2014).	Learning climate & workplace learning	Learning climate workplace learning	H	Examines how facilitation, appreciation, and error-avoidance	RQ2
19	London et al. (1999)	London, M., Larsen, H. H., & Thisted, L. N. (1999). Relationships	Feedback & self-development	Feedback self-development	H	Examines how feedback perceptions relate to self-	RQ2
20	Colangelo (2013)	Colangelo, D. (2013). Disentangling individual, organization, and	Antecedents of participation in development	Why people participate development activities	H	Identifies supervisory support, individual development plans,	RQ2
21	Wang & Wang (2004)	Wang, G. G., & Wang, J. (2004). Toward a theory of human	HRD participation framework	HRD learning participation factors	H	Conceptual framework for learning participation structured around	RQ1, RQ2
22	Gardner et al. (2012)	Gardner, B., Lally, P., & Wardle, J. (2012). Making health habitual: The	Habit formation & behaviour change	Habit formation behaviour change	H	Explains the role of automaticity, contextual cues, and small steps in	RQ2, RQ3
23	Cash et al. (2017)	Cash, P. J., Hartlev, C. G., & Durazo, C. B. (2017). Behavioural design: A	Behavioural design process	Behavioural design process	H	Examines the role of behaviour in design practice; provides an	RQ3
24	Khadilkar & Cash (2020)	Khadilkar, P. R., & Cash, P. (2020). Understanding behavioural design:	Barriers & enablers in behavioural design	Behavioural design barriers enablers	H	Identifies user-side barriers (coercion, awareness of	RQ2, RQ3
25	Doblin / Deloitte (2017)	Doblin. (2017). Behavioral design toolkit (Version 3.1). Deloitte	Behavioural design toolkit	Behavioural design toolkit	H	Provides tactical behavioural design cards including	RQ3
26	Edmondson (2011)	Edmondson, A. C. (2011). Strategies for learning from failure.	Failure as a learning barrier	Failure learning culture / blame culture	H	Argues that blame culture is the primary barrier to learning from	RQ2
27	Biesta (2020)	Biesta, G. (2020). Risking ourselves in education: Qualification,	Subjectification, freedom & education	Education PD qualification subjectification	M	Provides a philosophical lens on autonomy and self-direction in	RQ1, RQ3
28	Ghosh et al. (2012)	Ghosh, R., Shuck, B., & Petrosko, J. (2012). Emotional intelligence and	Emotional intelligence & team learning	Emotional intelligence team learning psychological safety	M	Shows that EI is positively related to team psychological safety and	RQ2

A: Synthesis matrix

29	Niedderer (2013)	Niedderer, K. (2013). Mindful design as a driver for social	Mindful design & behaviour change	Mindful design behaviour change	M	Proposes mindful design (functional disruptions for	RQ3
30	Wijga et al. (2025)	Wijga, M., Beusaert, S., & Kyndt, E. (2025). What drives workplace	Antecedents of workplace learning	Antecedents workplace learning drivers	H	2025 systematic review of what drives learning at work; highly	RQ2
31	Kyndt & Baert (2013)	Kyndt, E., & Baert, H. (2013). Antecedents of employees'	Antecedents of employee learning involvement	Antecedents employee learning involvement	H	Systematic review of antecedents to employee learning; relevant to	RQ2
32	Vargas et al. (2025)	Vargas, R. J., Santos, O., Fialho, M., Costa, J., Eifler, N., Marques-	Self-leadership & well-being	Self-leadership development performance	M	Links self-leadership development to flow and happiness; relevant as	RQ1, RQ2
33	Oakwood Training (2024)	Oakwood Training. (2024). Reflective practice in the	Reflective practice in the workplace	Reflective practice personal development workplace	M	Links reflective practice to resilience, self-awareness, and	RQ2, RQ3
34	Vroom (1964)	Vroom, V. H. (1964). Work and motivation. Wiley.	Expectancy theory of motivation	Expectancy theory motivation reward	H	Expectancy theory explains motivation as a product of	RQ2
35	Atkins et al. (2017)	Atkins, L., Francis, J., Islam, R., O'Connor, D., Patey, A., Ivers, N., ...	TDF implementation guide	TDF implementation behaviour change	H	Practical guide to applying the TDF to investigate implementation	RQ2
36	Blackman et al. (2016)	Blackman, D. A., Johnson, S. J., Buick, F., et al. (2016). The 70:20:10	70:20:10 learning model	PD frameworks 70-20-10 model	M	Evaluates the 70:20:10 model (70% on-the-job, 20% social, 10% formal	RQ3
37	Kane et al. (1999)	Kane, B., Crawford, J., & Grant, D. (1999). Barriers to effective HRM.	Barriers to HRM implementation	Barriers HRM effectiveness	M	Identifies barriers between theoretical HRM design and	RQ2
38	Barrena-Martinez et al. (2018)	Barrena-Martinez, J., López-Fernández, M., & Romero-	Drivers & barriers in HRM	Drivers barriers HRM socially responsible	M	Examines drivers and barriers in responsible HRM; provides context	RQ2
39	Bryson & O'Neil (2009)	Bryson, J., & O'Neil, P. (2009). A workplace view of drivers and	Workplace drivers & barriers to capability development	Drivers barriers capability development workplace	M	Practitioner-oriented analysis of drivers and barriers to human	RQ2
40	Zheng (2025)	Zheng, F. (2025). Lifelong learning dimensions and their associations	Lifelong learning & cognitive health	Lifelong learning cognitive health	L	Studies late-life cognitive health benefits of information-driven	RQ1
41	Guinsisana (2025)	Guinsisana, K. (2025). From mindful learning to responsive assessment:	Growth mindset & feedback in learning	Growth mindset feedback learning dynamics	M	Connects growth mindset to feedback receptiveness and learner	RQ2
42	Karwowski & Brzeski (2017)	Karwowski, M., & Brzeski, A. (2017). Creative mindsets: Prospects and	Creative mindset – fixed vs growth	Creativity growth mindset fixed mindset	M	Examines the relationship between creativity and fixed/growth	RQ1
43	Božić (2024)	Božić, V. (2024). Creative industries: The future of innovation and	Creative industries & skills gap	Creative industries future innovation skills	H	Establishes that creative industries face skills gaps and need PD to	RQ1
44	VML Future 100 (2025)	VML. (2025). The Future 100: 2025. https://www.vml.com/insight/the-future-100-2025	Creative industry trends 2025	Future of creative industry / AI trends	M	Industry trend report; contextualises Essense's position in	RQ1
45	Suprianto (2026)	Suprianto, S. (2026). The effect of career development and self-	Career development & performance	Career development self-efficacy employee performance	L	Links career development and self-efficacy to performance; low	RQ1
46	The Effect of Job Promotion & Competence on Performance	Author unknown. (n.d.). The effect of job promotion and competence	Promotion, competence & performance	Job promotion competence performance	L	Examines perceived fairness of promotion and supervisor support	RQ2
47	Jeong et al. (2018)	Jeong, S., Han, S. J., Lee, J., Sunalai, S., & Yoon, S. W. (2018). Integrative	Antecedents of informal workplace learning	Informal learning workplace antecedents	M	Reviews antecedents of informal learning; relevant to understanding	RQ2
48	Steers et al. (2004)	Steers, R. M., Mowday, R. T., & Shapiro, D. L. (2004). The future of	Future of motivation theory	Work motivation theory future	M	Overarching review of work motivation theories; provides	RQ2
49	Bernelo et al. (2011)	Bernelo, M., Honsberg, S., Järelöv, A., Blennow, J., & Peterson, L.	PD focus & motivation in education	Personal development students motivation performance	L	Education-context study; limited direct applicability to workplace PD	RQ1
50	Rose (2013)	Rose, V. J. (2013). Job satisfaction and personal growth. Journal of	Job satisfaction & personal growth	Job satisfaction personal growth vocational	L	Direct link between vocational development and job satisfaction;	RQ1
51	McCarthy (2024)	McCarthy, P. (2024). Personal development [practitioner source].	PD definition – autonomy & competence	Personal development definition autonomy competence	L	Practitioner definition of PD; distinguishes personal	RQ1
52	Haimovitz & Dweck (2016) [cited in Han et al.]	Haimovitz, K., & Dweck, C. S. (2016). What predicts children's fixed and	Failure mindsets & domain-specific mindsets	Failure mindset growth mindset domain specific	M	Demonstrates that failure mindsets (not intelligence mindsets) are	RQ2

B Interview Questions

Introduction & Warm-up

This is the starting point of the interview.

- Thank the participants for their time.
- Confirm they have signed the informed consent form. Ask for permission to begin recording.
- Briefly explain the study's aim.
- Remind them there are no wrong answers and they can skip any question or stop at any time.
- Ask if there are any questions before we begin.
- Due to time constraints there is no icebreaker involved, the first theme contain low-intensity questions and hence will function as an opener.

General information

Theme A: Role Goal of the theme:Background information to determine if certain factors might correlate with the found data.

- Q A.1 : What is your current role at Essense?
- Q A.2 : How long have you worked here?
- Q A.3 : What roles did you occupy before?

In depth questions

Theme B: Definition of PD

Goal of the theme: Find out what PD means within Essense to make sure everybody understands what we are talking about.

- Lead Question B.1: How would you define the term personal development? What does this mean to you?
- Potential Probes:
 - Is this definition the same within Essense?
 - Is this a negative or positive term?
 - What subjects do you think are connected to PD?

Theme C:Personal development now

Goal of the theme : Find out what employees think about the PD in Essense now. Find what they are happy about and what they are unsatisfied about.

Goal of the LQ: Find out how the experience with the current system is.

- Lead Question C.1: How is your experience with PD currently? Could you walk me through your most recent experience with PD?
- Potential Probes:
 - If you could "delete" or "change" one part of the current PD process, what would it be and why?
 - What do you definitely want to keep within the current system?
 - If you could "add" one part of the current PD process, what would it be and why?
 - How often do you work on PD? How much is in your allocated "PD-time" and how much is in other work activities?
 - In your eyes, whose responsibility is PD—the individual's, the lead's, or the company's?

Goal of the LQ: Find out if employees know how PD works now and what tools are involved. If there is enough opportunity and resources to work on PD.

- Lead Question C.2: What tools and support for PD is given now? Is this enough?
- Potential Probes:
 - How much do you use these?
 - Was it clear that the PD tools could be used? Is it easy to do so?
 - How is your experience with training and webinars options?
 -

Goal of the LQ: Find out if employees know how to set up PD goals and if they have a base to work from.

- Lead Question C.3: How do you find the points you want to develop on? How do you define your PD goals?
- Potential Probes:
 - What tools or methods do you use to define your PD goals now?
 - Do you use feedback and self-assessment as input for your self development goals?
 - Is it easy for you to translate this input as it is now into a concrete learning goal?
 - Do you feel like it is clear what is expected from you to develop from Eidra/essense?
 - Do you feel like you need more structure or tools from the company for your self-development?
 - Do you feel like you need more from Essense/Eidra to define your goals?

Goal of the LQ: Find out how the PD tracking is done and if active reflection is done.

- Lead Question C.4: Is there a way you track your PD? How do you reflect on your progress?
- Potential Probes:
 - Do you use this as input for your new PD goals?
 - Do you feel you reflect and evaluate enough in your work?
 - Do you have a clear overview of what you need to work on?
 - Is there someone that also keeps track of your progress?

Goal of the LQ: Find out if PD is rewarded, acknowledged and if there are any consequences for not working on PD.

- Lead Question C.5: How is your progress in PD acknowledged?
- Potential Probes:
 - Do you think you are rewarded for working on PD?
 - Are there any consequences for not working on PD?

Theme D: Continuously PD work

Goal of the theme: PD works only if it is done continuously. I want to know what type of process thinking (dual processing theory) is applicable here.

This will help me pinpoint the problem better.

- Lead Question D.1: When working on PD, does it request a lot of focus and thinking time or is it automatic?
- Potential Probes:
 - Is this different for varying stages of PD? also for setting PD goals?
 - Does it take you too much effort and time?

Theme E: Feedback culture and freedom to fail- Room for development Goal of the theme: Find out if there is a feedback culture and how this is perceived. Additionally determine how much social safety is felt and if there is a freedom to explore and fail. This determines a freedom for development within the essence culture.

Goal of the LQ: Find out how the feedback culture is perceived and how feedback is handled.

- Lead Question E.1: How would you describe the feedback culture within essence?
- Potential Probes:
 - What is missing or lacking?
 - What do you like?
 - Do you feel you receive and give sufficient feedback?

Goal of the LQ: Determine if "failure" is accepted and how the company responds to "mistakes". See if employees feel free to explore and develop and if there is a felt social safety.

- Lead Question E.2: How do you feel mistakes are handled?
- Potential Probes:
 - Do you feel free to try new things and develop new skills? Is there enough "wiggle" room?
 - Is there a certain safety net for potential learning? When is there and when not?
 - Do you feel comfortable to behave as you wish in the Essense environment?

Theme F: Possibility to grow from the individual

Goal of the theme: Find out if the employees feel a sense of freedom to explore and develop and if they believe they are able to do so.

Goal of the LQ: Find out if employees believe in their own capabilities and ability to grow. Find out if employees have a fixed or growth mindset.

Additionally, see if their role and current position has an influence on this capability to grow.

- Lead Question F.1: Do you think that you can evolve in your capabilities and are able to learn new skills?
- Potential Probes:
 - Do you think that you can develop any type of skill or competence? Why (not)?
 - Do you think that if you work hard enough you can learn anything or have you reached your limit in certain capabilities?
 - Do you intend to develop your competences actively?

Goal of the LQ: Find out if role and identity in the company influences their PD.

- Lead Question F.2: Do you feel like your role and identity are of influence on your PD?
- Potential Probes:
 - Have you ever experienced this in your work?
 - Do you feel that you are able to work on PD within your work?

Theme H: Desires and motivation for PD

Goal of the theme: Find the desires in PD (that did not become apparent yet). Find out to what extent they want to actively work on PD and why. (If not already mentioned in the answering of the questions above)

- Lead Question H.1: What would you desire for your PD? What do you need to actively work on this?
- Potential Probes:
 - What motivates you to work on PD?
 - Do you desire to work more on PD or would you rather spend your time on other activities? Why is this?
 - How many times a week and for how long do you work on your personal development ?

Conclusion & Wrap-up

- Final check-in:
 - Is there anything else related to personal development that you feel is important for me to know, which we haven't covered yet?
 - Is there anything else that you would like to share?

- Next Steps: Explain how the data will be used and when the study results might be available.
- Closing: Stop the recording. Thank the participant again and provide contact info if they have follow-up questions or comments.

C Consent form

note on this: This is one consent form (interviews~) - the consent form differ over types of reserach with participants done (co-creation, user tests)

Delft University of Technology
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
INFORMED CONSENT
Interviews

Participant Information/Opening Statement
The purpose of this research study is to get an understanding about personal development within the company of Essense and will take you approximately 60 minutes to complete. The data of this research will be used for the development of a deliverable for the company of Essense and for the Msc strategic project design graduation project and report. We will be asking you to give personal experiences and views on the subject of personal development.Furthermore, questions will be asked concerning work within the company of Essense, job satisfaction, personal wants and needs.
As with any online activity the risk of a breach is always possible. To the best of our ability your answers in this study will remain confidential. We will minimize any risks by anonymizing your answers, data will be stored safely. Names, faces and data that could lead back to participants will be anonymized.The data will be used for research purposes only. Experience and function type will be noted and used in research.
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to omit any questions. If you wish to not include specific data you will have to note this within a timeframe of two weeks.
For questions, remarks or other matters I can be reached any time at

Tel;
Email;

Explicit Consent points

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES	Yes	No
A: GENERAL AGREEMENT – RESEARCH GOALS, PARTICIPANT TASKS AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION		
1. I have read and understood the study information dated [23/02/2000], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study		

RESEARCH GOALS, PARTICIPANT TASKS AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

1. I have read and understood the study information dated [23/02/2000], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	☐	☐
2. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	☐	☐
3. I understand that taking part in the study involves: - an audio-recorded interview and written notes	☐	☐
5. I understand that the study will end with the end of the graduation project at 03-06-2026		

B: POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING (INCLUDING DATA PROTECTION)		
6. I understand that taking part in the study involves the following risks Mental discomfort due to the nature of the research lying close to personal experience and mental health. I understand that these will be mitigated by the ability to ask for the interview to stop at any point and the possibility to not comment on certain questions or subjects.	☐	☐
7. I understand that taking part in the study also involves collecting specific personal information with the potential risk of my identity being revealed.	☐	☐
8. I understand that some of this personal information is considered as sensitive data; Data concerning mental health and personal experiences may be collected and processed	☐	☐
9. I understand that the following steps will be taken to minimise the threat of a data breach, and protect my identity in the event of such a breach [data will be stored in a TU Delft data storage where it will be kept safe, access will be limited to the researcher only, results will only be shared with TU Delft and Essense, Faces on photos will be blurred, names will be replaced in transcripts]	☐	☐
10. I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as [e.g. my name, or age], will not be shared beyond the study team. mitigating measures to be taken are - (pseudo-) anonymisation - secure data storage/limited access, transcription		
11. I understand that the (identifiable) personal data I provide will be destroyed immediately after the end of the graduation project at 03-06-2026 (Potentially the graduation project will be prolonged, then the data will be stored until the new set date)	☐	☐

C: RESEARCH PUBLICATION, DISSEMINATION AND APPLICATION		
12. I understand that after the research study the de-identified information I provide will be used for a graduation report and a deliverable used within Essense and a presentation for the graduation where parties outside Essense and TU Delft will be present.	☐	☐
13. I agree that my responses, views or other input can be quoted anonymously in research outputs.	☐	☐

Team for further information at
copyright-lib@tudelft.nl and
insert appropriate consent
questions accordingly.

Signatures

Name of participant [printed] Signature Date

I, as researcher, have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Rosalie Ira van Alphen
Researcher Name [printed] Signature Date

Study contact details for further information:

Rosalie Ira van Alphen

Tel:

Email:

D Aggregated findings & synthesis matrix

This matrix maps the empirical qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews (E1–E8) to specific research goals, structural themes, and theoretical components derived from the COM-B model, the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF), and Dual Process Theory. It constitutes the analytical bridge between the raw interview data and the thematic findings presented in Section 5.2.

Theme & LQ	Research Goal	Aggregated Findings (E1–E8)	Theoretical Link (COM-B / TDF / Dual Process)
B.1: Definition of PD	How do employees define PD?	PD defined as combination of technical/hard skills and social/interpersonal soft skills (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6). Meaning is context and role dependent (E1, E4). Reflection identified as a key component (E5, E6). Development as growth toward a desired direction (E8).	Psychological Capability – Knowledge: absence of a shared definition contributes to cognitive friction before development begins.
C.1: System Experience	How do employees experience the current PD system?	Freedom and ownership appreciated (E1, E8). Proactiveness required and expected (E1, E4, E5). Hard to integrate PD into daily work (E1, E2, E3, E5). System is lacking (E3, E4, E5), unclear (E1, E4, E6, E7), and not continuous (E1, E7). No information provided at onboarding (E1, E4). Temporal gap between check-in moments identified, during which PD is deprioritised (E5, E6). Lack of clear action points (E4, E6).	Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources: structural absence of continuous system; Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation: inability to self-regulate PD without system support.
C.2: Tools and Resources	Are existing resources sufficient and used?	Insufficient tools available (E4). Training and webinars not approved due to budget, time, and alignment constraints — employees feel discouraged (E7). No examples of training directions provided (E2, E3). Coaching welcomed (E1, E7). Eidra Academy a positive addition (E7, E8). Lack of continuous support system (E2).	Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources: low accessibility of resources; Psychological Capability – Knowledge: absence of curated examples creates entry barrier.
C.3: Goal Setting	What serves as input for PD goals?	Input sources: career/role (E1, E4, E6, E7), colleagues as examples (E1, E2, E4), feedback (E5, E7, E8), reflection (E5, E6, E8), personal goals (E2, E6), company goals (E2, E5). Random and unrealistic goals driven by YER pressure (E3, E4). Tactical goal-setting for achievability (E4). Insufficient time to build and iterate on goals (E7). No continuous usage of goals outside YER (E4, E5).	Psychological Capability – Skills / Goals: inability to deconstruct ambitions without scaffolding; Reflective Motivation – Intentions: goal-setting driven by compliance rather than genuine development intent.
C.4: Tracking	How is PD progress tracked?	Tracking absent for the large majority (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8). No guidance or working system (E2, E3). Tracking only at YER/mid-year (E5, E7). Not required by Essence (E6). Individual initiative only (E6, E7). YER moments insufficient for ongoing overview (E1, E5).	Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation: no system to support self-monitoring; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes: absence of tracking removes foundation for informed next-step decisions.
C.4: Reflection	How is PD progress reflected upon?	Systematic guidance lacking (E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7). Reflection only facilitated at YER and mid-year (E3) — compliance-driven rather than developmental. Not required by Essence (E6). Left to individual initiative (E2, E4, E5, E7, E8). Some employees naturally integrate reflection (E1, E8). Self-knowledge capacity varies across cohort.	Psychological Capability – Behavioural Regulation: reflection requires protected cognitive space not currently provided; Memory, Attention and Decision Processes: absence of continuous reflection prevents self-knowledge development.
C.5: Rewards and Recognition	Is PD acknowledged and rewarded?	No formal rewards or consequences linked to PD (E1, E2, E6, E7). Acknowledgement only project-based (E1). PD evaluated only at check-in moments (E5, E6, E7). Growth and self-directiveness occasionally acknowledged (E8) but not universally. Rewards only when PD has direct added value in client work (E4). Unclear what is needed for acknowledgement (E3, E6).	Reflective Motivation – Reinforcement: PD operates in an institutional vacuum disconnected from formal reward mechanisms; Automatic Motivation – Reinforcement: absence of positive reinforcement weakens habitual engagement.
D.1: Cognitive Processing	Which cognitive system is primarily used in PD?	Goal-setting, reflection, and planning consistently require effortful System 2 focus (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6, E7, E8). On-the-job PD tasks can be integrated with less effort once a plan is in place — System 1 (E1, E2, E7, E8). High workload depletes System 2 reserves, pushing employees into habitual System 1 client-work loops (E2, E8). System 2 identified as essential for reflection (E3) and planning (E4).	Dual Process Theory: System 2 depletion under workload triggers regression to habitual System 1 loops; Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context: absence of protected time prevents System 2 PD tasks from occurring.
E.1: Feedback Culture	What is the nature of the feedback culture?	Feedback structure lacking (E1, E4, E6). Feedback is unclear (E1) and inconsistent (E1). Culture is very positive (E5, E6, E8) but sugarcoating leads to overly positive feedback lacking constructive critique (E2, E3, E5, E6). Client feedback hard to obtain (E1, E2). No systematic tracking of feedback (E5). In-house roles struggle to collect team feedback (E3).	Social Opportunity – Social Influences: sugarcoated feedback culture prevents objective capability mapping; Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences: lack of constructive feedback limits ability to identify genuine development directions.

E1–E8 = interview participant codes. COM-B = Capability, Opportunity, Motivation — Behaviour (West & Michie, 2020). TDF = Theoretical Domains Framework (Cane et al., 2012). Dual Process Theory: Kahneman (2011); Sloman (1996).

Theme & LQ	Research Goal	Aggregated Findings (E1–E8)	Theoretical Link (COM-B / TDF / Dual Process)
E.2: Psychological Safety	Is there room for exploration and failure?	Room to try new things and fail broadly felt (E1, E2, E4, E6, E7, E8). Transparency and openness required for failure to be safe (E8). High-performer culture creates self-imposed pressure — freedom to fail felt less strongly (E6). Focus on successes leaves little room for learning from failure (E7). Social safety dependent on coach relationship quality (E7).	Social Opportunity – Social Influences: psychological safety broadly present but unevenly distributed; Automatic Motivation – Emotion: self-imposed performance pressure inhibits exploratory behaviour.
F.1: Growth Mindset	Do employees hold a growth or fixed mindset?	Growth mindset present across all participants (E1–E8). Continuous learning valued (E5). Some variation in motivation to grow all competencies equally (E3, E4, E8). Learning curve acknowledged to become less steep with seniority (E4).	Reflective Motivation – Optimism; Beliefs about Capabilities: strong intrinsic belief in capacity for development — motivational foundation for the system is present and does not need to be generated from scratch.
F.2: Role and Identity	Does role or function influence PD direction?	Role has high influence on PD direction (E2, E3, E4, E5). Development perceived as only valid when applicable to work (E2, E3, E4, E5). Career path shapes goal direction (E3, E4, E6, E7, E8). Cross-functional development possible but requires a sense of purpose — "why would I develop this?" One participant views PD as entirely independent of role (E1).	TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity: role identity narrows perceived scope of valid PD; Reflective Motivation – Beliefs about Consequences: development only felt as worthwhile when it has direct work utility.
H.1: Desires	What do employees desire from a PD system?	Continuous structural support (E2, E6, E7). More system and guidance (E4, E5, E6). Ownership and freedom preserved (E1, E8). Goal deconstruction support — breaking ambitions into concrete steps (E1, E3, E4, E5, E7). Examples of training directions (E1, E3, E4, E5). Reflection system (E2, E3, E5, E6). Tracking system (E2, E3, E5, E6). Frictionless integration into daily workflows (E2, E6, E7). Transparency regarding evaluation, rewards, and consequences (E3). Personality-based coach matching (E7). More accessible training and budget	Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context: desire for structural protection of PD time; Reflective Motivation – Intentions / Goals: desire for scaffolding that bridges intent and action without removing autonomy.
Extra Notes	What additional relevant information emerged?	Seniority correlates with ability to get developmental overview and identify right directions (E5). Natural ability to integrate PD into work grows with experience (E5, E8). Self-created feedback and reflection systems developed by senior employees (E5, E8).	Psychological Capability – Skills: seniority capital as informal blueprint; TDF – Social/Professional Role and Identity: tacit developmental knowledge unevenly distributed across seniority levels.
Limitations	What operational limitations constrain PD?	Role constraints most frequently mentioned (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E7, E8). Development must have direct added value in work (E4, E5, E6, E8). Project allocation and client work narrow development options (E2, E3, E4, E6). High workload (E1, E2, E3, E5, E6, E7, E8) and limited time (E1, E2, E3, E6, E7) most universally cited. Training access limited by approval requirements (E1, E4, E7) and costs (E1, E4). Lack of support (E5, E6, E7) and structure (E5, E6). Seniority influences ability to self-direct PD (E4, E5, E6, E7).	Physical Opportunity – Environmental Context and Resources: operational conditions structurally constrain the space available for PD regardless of individual motivation or capability.

E: Concept posters AI input

All information provided as input per poster, written out as a reference document.

Branding & Design Rules (applied across all posters)

Typography

- All copy: Buenos Aires · Forest Green #044524 · Light weight for normal text · Regular for highlights
- Titles & headers: Nib Pro · lowercase (exceptions: names, titles, acronyms)

Colours

- Forest Green #044524 — all body copy, dark backgrounds
- Essense Green #579B7A — logo, highlights, accents, section labels
- Bright Green #EAF5F2 — section backgrounds, light accents
- Eggshell #FAF0DB — page/poster backgrounds, diagram notes
- Yellow #FFC502 — call to action, value proposition bars, pain point markers
- Amber #E8A030 — embedded rituals in diagrams
- Warm Grey #888780 — tracking/neutral diagram steps
- Mid Green #2D6A4F — social/peer-driven diagram features
- Gold #D8A020 — AI-driven/automated diagram steps
- White #FFFFFF — journeys, charts, content cards only

Logo

- Essense logo on all documents · only in Essense Green #579B7A or White on dark backgrounds

Poster 01 — Developing Together (The Social Loop)

Naam

Developing Together

Focus

Social connection, sharing economy, and cultural change.

General Concept Description

Personal development is transformed from an individual "expedition" into a collective journey. The system facilitates human interaction and vulnerability to break the isolation.

Key Features (described)

Shared Accountability Matchmaker An AI-driven link in Slack that connects colleagues with similar goals for motivation and shared problem-solving. To connect these people, the system uses the goals set in the roadmap via AI, Slack, and Notion.

Top-Down Failure Celebrating Leads actively share their own mistakes first, modelling vulnerability and creating a safe culture. From there, everyone is invited to join — fully voluntary. A dedicated Slack channel (#celebrate-fuckups) gives the movement a home. This includes a dedicated platform where peers can share normalized "fuck-ups," following the example set by leads.

The Learning Gallery A visual archive where colleagues can view and review each other's "Learning Journeys" and learn from each other's experiences. This uses input from tracking and reflection (with permission) and utilises a rating slider to link experiences to learning journeys.

All Features (described)

Multi-Level Visual Roadmap A shared template in Miro/Notion that helps employees make goals visual from year to day level. This requires a set template for them to fill in easily to ensure easy usage across Miro, Notion, and Slack.

Standardized Habit Rituals Fixed templates for short tracking after a project milestone. Needs a reminder and simple tracking setup/template to document learnings, mistakes, and project +/- ratings.

Integrated Reflection Rituals Planned moments such as a "Reflection Breakfast" during Essense Days. Needs specific options for integration and concrete examples for execution on for instance Essense Day.

Peer-to-Peer Review Colleagues review courses and tools with a rating system for others. Introduced during onboarding (the onboarding is now done in Miro) to inspire others and demonstrate diverse growth paths.

Pain Points Fixed

- Solo on-site isolation
- Fear of failure
- Lack of motivation

Value Proposition

"Growth is not a solo project; we learn faster when we fail and celebrate together."

User Journey

A designer logs an error in the tracker → The AI asks if this can be shared → During the 'Reflection Breakfast' the team discusses similar errors → The designer feels supported and receives direct tips from a 'Growth Buddy'.

System Diagram

Career framework dimensions (Delivery · People · Added Value) tag every tracked milestone and learning. Coaching sessions use Growth Tracker data as input.

Steps:

1. Fill your roadmap — Notion + Miro · year → month → week · tagged by dimension + discipline track · AI agent helps fill in the roadmap · buddy (optional)
2. Track every milestone — Notion · learn / went wrong / rating / share? toggle · 5 min · dimension tag 3a. Failure feed — Slack · #celebrate-fuckups · leads go first · voluntary for all · failure tagged by dimension 3b. Learning Gallery — Notion · wall of growth · peer ratings 1–5 · filterable by dimension + track
- Learning Journeys — Miro · visual cards · shows dimension growth over time
3. Reflection rituals — embedded in team rhythm · short · recurring · fits existing moments
- Reflection Breakfast · Essense Day · monthly · team shares failures · grouped by dimension
- Project wrap-up · end of project · 10 min · one learning per dimension
- Standup add-on · friday · 5 min · one win · one struggle
4. Shared learnings feed back — Notion · wall of growth grows · roadmap stays live · data feeds into coaching sessions (plan → collect → share → assess)
- Links to existing system: Growth Tracker data → shared with career coach · dimension tags align with twice-yearly calibration · roadmap connects to coaching cycle

Poster 02 — The Seamless Digital Assistant (The Invisible Agent)

Naam

The Seamless Digital Assistant

Focus

Automation, efficiency, and unburdening the employees.

General Concept Description

This concept uses AI and deep integration into existing tools (Slack/Notion) to make PD feel like a byproduct of work, rather than an extra task on top of a high workload.

Key Features (described)

AI-driven Micro-tasking An agent that scans major ambitions in Notion and translates them into bite-sized 15-minute actions in Slack. This utilises pre-made templates and optimized AI usage to lower the threshold.

Feasibility-based Integration AI links learning goals to the designer's current project role for direct relevance. An AI agent helps create an overview and break goals into smaller, realistic steps via a step-by-step template.

Stealth Tracking After each AI-suggested action, a Slack bot asks a single question — "Was this useful?" — answered with one emoji: helpful or not for me. The response silently updates the Notion database with zero admin overhead.

All Features (described)

Curated Training Menu An AI-sorted list of resources based on competencies and time availability. AI searches for competencies and links them to podcasts/webinars/possible trainings; includes option for peer suggestions and experiences.

Time Sanctity Automation Optional: let the agent block PD time in your agenda — you stay in control. Requires management acknowledgment in onboarding and a clear information flow making the 4% time commitment a "must" from the start.

Dynamic Reflection Formats Rotating formats that vary to keep reflection more accessible, easy and surprising. Focuses on positive psychology (successes/energy gain) using AI-driven templates in Notion and Slack.

Progress Overview Dashboard An automated visual overview of growth over time. Specifically tracks and reflects on goals entered at the start of the year via easy-to-fill Notion/Slack templates.

Pain Points Fixed

- Busy-ness barrier
- Administrative burden
- Choice stress and the blank page problem (e.g. where to start)

Value Proposition

"Focus on your craft; we take care of the rest of your development."

User Journey

A designer starts a new project → The AI suggests a relevant article from the menu → The AI blocks 20 min in the calendar → Afterward, a Slack bot asks: "Was this useful?" → Progress is invisibly updated in Notion.

System Diagram

The three framework dimensions (Delivery · People · Added Value) and discipline tracks structure goal setup, micro-tasks, and the training menu. The agent uses them as filters to make suggestions relevant.

Steps:

1. Annual goal setup — Notion · role · ambitions · dimension focus (Delivery / People / Added Value) · discipline track · career framework imported · time available
2. AI agent nudges — Slack · scans goals + dimension focus · suggests relevant action · optionally adds 20-min PD block to calendar · tagged by dimension 3a. Micro-tasks — Notion · big goal → 3 × 15 min steps · tagged by dimension + discipline track (Delivery: craft/execution · People: collaboration/comms · Added Value: company building) 3b. Reflection moments — Slack · rotating formats · positive psychology · prompts reference dimension focus · answers feed coaching sessions · aligns with calibration
3. Curated training menu — Notion · AI-sorted · filtered by dimension + discipline track · podcasts · webinars · courses · peer suggestions · browse anytime
4. Stealth tracking — Slack · bot asks "Was this useful?" after each action · one emoji or · silently updates Notion · zero admin
5. Progress dashboard grows — Notion · shows growth per dimension · used as input forcoaching sessions + calibration
- Links to existing system: Progress dashboard → shared with career coach before calibration · dimension tags align with evaluation criteria · micro-tasks map directly to framework behaviours

Poster 03 — The Guided Career Architect (The PD Backbone)

Naam

The Guided Career Architect

Focus

Structure, autonomy, and long-term frameworks.

General Concept Description

A robust "menu" of growth paths that gives employees control over their own careers without letting them drown in a "blank page."

Key Features (described)

The PD Backbone A role-based curriculum in Notion — junior to lead — that translates the Essense career framework into concrete steps per dimension (Delivery, People, Added Value). It replaces the blank page with a scaffolded path, enriching the framework pages already in Notion. Includes "together" activities during onboarding to highlight the importance of PD.

Pick-and-Choose Library An extensive, categorized database where designers assemble their own "learning menu." Includes an option to automatically add these choices to the visual roadmap.

Multi-Level Visual Roadmap A tight hierarchy in Notion that links annual goals to monthly actions. Uses an automated fill-in template to guide the "pick and choose" process, with an AI agent available for extra help.

What the Backbone Does

- Role curriculum per level — junior → lead, with clear competencies per dimension. No guessing what the next step looks like.
- Links to training library — each milestone unfolds relevant resources directly; no searching required.
- Enriches existing Notion — builds on the framework already in Notion — not a replacement, an upgrade.
- Onboarding anchor — new hires start here, making it the foundation for every PD conversation.
- Coaching input — progress feeds into coaching sessions and calibration — growth becomes visible.
- Self-directed by design — guides without forcing. Autonomy stays intact, direction is always there.

All Features (described)

Standardized Habit Rituals A fixed step-by-step plan for tracking after every project or milestone. Onboarding is a "must" for this habit to ensure tracking becomes a seamless, out-of-the-box ritual.

Positive Psychology Reflection Reflection templates that force looking at successes and energy-givers. Includes step-by-step fill-in templates with reminders; pop-ups timed based on links to Google Calendar.

Onboarding Integration A fixed starting point for new employees to plant their first "tree" and learn the system.

Goal & Development Tracking Dashboard A static overview where proactivity is rewarded. The system loops back all tracking and reflection data to provide a development overview over time.

Pain Points Fixed

- Blank page problem
- Lack of direction
- Inconsistency

Value Proposition

"From a blank page to a crystal-clear roadmap for your career."

User Journey

A designer wants to get promoted → She consults the 'Backbone' in Notion for that role → She 'shops' for the required courses from the menu → She plans these in her roadmap → After every month she checks off milestones and sees her progress grow.

System Diagram

The career framework is the primary input — Delivery · People · Added Value structure the backbone, the library, and the roadmap. The PD Backbone enriches existing framework pages already in Notion.

Inputs (set up once, updated annually):

- Essense career framework — Delivery · People · Added Value · 5 discipline tracks · 7 career levels · already in Notion
- AI-suggested extra competencies — sector trends · emerging tools · soft skills

Steps:

1. Pick-and-choose training library — Notion · tagged by dimension + discipline track · role level · time · peer suggestions · AI help (optional)
2. Visual roadmap — Notion + Miro · year → month → week · milestone unfolds library resources · adjustable anytime
3. PD Backbone — Notion · role curriculum · junior → lead · structured by Delivery / People / Added Value per level · links to library · enriches existing framework pages · onboarding anchor
- Delivery: craft & execution
- People: collab & comms
- Added Value: company building
4. Track every milestone — Notion + Slack · 5 min form · slack reminder · dimension tag · calendar triggers reflection · data feeds coaching sessions
5. Reflection moments — Slack + Notion · 4 rotating formats · positive psychology · prompts reference dimension focus · auto-saves · aligns with calibration cycle
6. Progress dashboard — Notion · growth shown per dimension + discipline track · career path advances visually · input for coaching + calibration
- Links to existing system: PD Backbone enriches existing Notion pages · dashboard → shared before coaching sessions + calibration · connects to plan → collect → share → assess cycle

Shared Context Across All Posters

Existing system elements referenced:

- Essense career framework (Delivery · People · Added Value · 5 discipline tracks · 7 career levels) — already in Notion
- Coaching cycle: Plan → Collect → Share → Assess · twice-yearly calibration
- Essense Day — monthly self-directed PD day
- Slack — primary communication tool, used daily
- Notion — documentation and framework pages
- Miro — onboarding, visual boards
- 4% PD time commitment — agreed principle, not yet enforced
- Google Calendar — used for scheduling

Current pain points (existing system):

- Blank page problem — no starting point for goal setting
- No tracking — growth invisible between coaching sessions
- Isolation — PD is a solo activity
- Busy-ness barrier — client work always wins
- Fear of failure — no safe space to share mistakes
- Coaching lacks input — sessions hard to prepare without structured data

Element type colour coding (diagrams):

- Forest Green — core step or new structure
- Gold — AI-driven or automated action
- Warm Grey — tracking or neutral step
- Mid Green — social, peer-driven or parallel feature
- Amber — embedded ritual
- Essense Green — enriched or activated element
- Bright Green — system link or connection note
- Eggshell — contextual note or annotation

F: Concept posters (AI generated)

ESSENSE

CONCEPT 01

developing together

the social loop

"Growth is not a solo project — we learn faster when we fail and celebrate together."

FOCUS

Social connection, sharing economy, and cultural change.

PAIN POINTS FIXED

- Solo on-site isolation
- Fear of failure
- Lack of motivation

GENERAL CONCEPT

Personal development is transformed from an individual expedition into a collective journey. The system facilitates human interaction and vulnerability to break isolation and accelerate shared growth.

KEY FEATURES

Shared Accountability Matchmaker

AI-driven link in Slack connecting colleagues with similar goals. Uses roadmap data via AI, Slack and Notion to pair Growth Buddies for motivation and shared problem-solving.

Top-Down Failure Celebrating

Leads actively share their own mistakes first, modelling vulnerability and creating a safe culture. From there, everyone is invited to join — fully voluntary. A dedicated Slack channel (#celebrate-fuckups) gives the movement a home.

The Learning Gallery

Visual archive in Notion where colleagues view each other's learning journeys, with a rating slider linking experiences to growth paths.

ALL FEATURES

Multi-Level Visual Roadmap

Shared Miro/Notion template · year to day level

Standardized Habit Rituals

Fixed templates · post-milestone tracking

Reflection Breakfast

Planned ritual on Essense Days · team discussion

Peer-to-Peer Review

Rating system · introduced during onboarding

USER JOURNEY

1

Designer logs an error in the tracker →

2

AI asks if it can be shared →

3

Team discusses at Reflection Breakfast →

4

Designer feels supported + gets tips from Growth Buddy

SYSTEM DIAGRAM

Forest Green

Core new steps & structure

Warm Grey

Tracking or neutral action

Mid Green

Social or peer-driven feature

Amber

Embedded team ritual

Essense Green

Enriched / activated element

Gold

AI-driven or automated action

Bright Green

System link or reference

Eggshell

Contextual note or annotation

Career framework dimensions (Delivery · People · Added Value) now tag every tracked milestone and learning. Coaching sessions use Growth Tracker data as input.

ONCE A YEAR — adjustable anytime

STEP 1 · fill your roadmap — notion + miro

year → month → week · tagged by dimension (Delivery / People / Added Value) + discipline track · adjustable anytime

AI agent helps fill in the roadmap

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR — continuous loop

STEP 2 · track every milestone — notion

learn / went wrong / rating / share? toggle · 5 min · dimension tag: Delivery / People / Added Value · discipline track tag

STEP 3a · failure feed — slack

Accelerate fuckups · leads go first · voluntary for all · failure tagged by dimension

STEP 3b · learning gallery — notion

wall of growth · peer ratings 1-5 · filterable by dimension + track

learning journeys — miro

visual cards · shows dimension growth over time

STEP 4 · integrate reflection into existing rituals

reflection rituals — embedded in team rhythm

short · recurring · fits existing moments · reflection themes linked to framework dimensions

reflection breakfast

essense day · monthly · team shares failures · grouped by dimension

project wrap-up

end of project · 10 min · one learning per dimension

standup add-on

Friday · 5 min · one win · one struggle

STEP 5

shared learnings feed back — notion

wall of growth grows · roadmap stays live · data feeds into coaching sessions (plan → collect → share → assess)

links to existing system

Growth Tracker data → shared with career coach · dimension tags align with twice-yearly calibration · roadmap connects to coaching cycle

new year → update roadmap

ESSENSE

CONCEPT 02

the seamless digital assistant

the invisible agent

"Focus on your craft — we take care of the rest of your development."

FOCUS

Automation, efficiency, and unbundling employees.

PAIN POINTS FIXED

- Busy-ness barrier
- Administrative burden
- Choice stress & the blank page

GENERAL CONCEPT

AI and deep integration into existing tools (Slack/Notion) make personal development feel like a byproduct of work — not an extra task on top of an already high workload.

KEY FEATURES

AI-driven Micro-tasking

An agent scanning major ambitions in Notion and translating them into bite-sized 15-minute actions delivered in Slack, using pre-made templates to lower the threshold.

Feasibility-based Integration

AI links learning goals to the designer's current project role for direct relevance, breaking goals into smaller realistic steps via a guided step-by-step template.

Stealth Tracking

After each AI-suggested action, a Slack bot asks a single question — "Was this useful?" — answered with one emoji: 🟢 helpful or 🛑 not for me. The response silently updates the Notion database with zero admin overhead.

ALL FEATURES

Curated Training Menu

AI-sorted by competency + time availability · podcasts · webinars · courses · peer suggestions

Time Sanctity Automation

Optional: let the agent block PD time in your agenda — you stay in control

Dynamic Reflection Formats

Rotating formats that vary to keep reflection accessible and surprising

Progress Overview Dashboard

Automated visual growth overview over time

USER JOURNEY

1

Designer starts a new project →

2

AI suggests a relevant article →

3

AI blocks 20 min in calendar →

4

Slack bot asks "Was this useful?" →

5

Progress invisibly updated in Notion

SYSTEM DIAGRAM

Forest Green

Core new steps & structure

Warm Grey

Tracking or neutral action

Mid Green

Parallel feature or track

Gold

AI-driven or automated action

Essense Green

Enriched / activated element

Bright Green

System link or reference

Eggshell

Contextual note or annotation

The three framework dimensions (Delivery · People · Added Value) and discipline tracks structure goal setup, micro-tasks, and the training menu. The agent uses them as filters to make suggestions relevant.

ONCE A YEAR

STEP 1 · annual goal setup — notion

role · ambitions · dimension focus (Delivery / People / Added Value) · discipline track · career framework imported · time available

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR — continuous loop

STEP 2 · AI agent nudges — slack

scans goals + dimension focus · suggests relevant action · optionally adds 20-min PD block to calendar · suggestions tagged by Delivery / People / Added Value

STEP 3 · two parallel tracks — always running

3a · micro-tasks — notion

big goal → 3 × 15 min steps · tagged by dimension + discipline track

Delivery: craft, execution
People: collaboration, comma
Added Value: company building

3b · reflection moments — slack

rotating formats · positive psychology · parallel to micro-tasks

Prompts reference dimension focus
Answers feed coaching sessions
Aligns with calibration moments

STEP 4 · standalone tool — always accessible

curated training menu — notion

AI-sorted · filtered by dimension (Delivery / People / Added Value) + discipline track · podcasts · webinars · courses · peer suggestions · browse anytime

STEP 5

stealth tracking — slack

bot asks "Was this useful?" after each action · one emoji: 🟢 or 🛑 · silently updates notion · zero admin

STEP 6

progress dashboard grows — notion

shows growth per dimension · tracks yearly goals · visible over time · used as input for coaching sessions + calibration

links to existing system

Progress dashboard → shared with career coach before calibration · dimension tags align with evaluation criteria · micro-tasks map directly to framework behaviours

new year → update goals + dimension focus

ESSENSE

CONCEPT 03

the guided career architect

the pd backbone

"From a blank page to a crystal-clear roadmap for your career."

FOCUS

Structure, autonomy, and long-term frameworks.

PAIN POINTS FIXED

- Blank page problem
- Lack of direction
- Inconsistency

GENERAL CONCEPT

A robust "menu" of growth paths giving employees control over their own careers, without letting them drown in a blank page. Structure provides freedom — not constraint.

KEY FEATURES

The PD Backbone

A role-based curriculum in Notion — junior to lead — that translates the Essense career framework into concrete steps per dimension (Delivery, People, Added Value). It replaces the blank page with a scaffolded path, enriching the framework pages already in Notion.

Pick-and-Choose Library

Extensive categorised database where designers assemble their own learning menu, with the option to automatically add choices to the visual roadmap.

Multi-Level Visual Roadmap

Tight hierarchy in Notion linking annual goals to monthly actions, with an automated fill-in template and optional AI agent for guidance.

WHAT THE BACKBONE DOES

Role curriculum per level

Junior → lead, with clear competencies per dimension. No guessing what the next step looks like.

Links to training library

Each milestone unfolds relevant resources directly — no searching required.

Enriches existing Notion

Builds on the framework already in Notion — not a replacement, an upgrade.

Onboarding anchor

New hires start here, making it the foundation for every PD conversation.

Coaching input

Progress feeds into coaching sessions and calibration — growth becomes visible.

Self-directed by design

Guides without forcing. Autonomy stays intact, direction is always there.

ALL FEATURES

Standardized Habit Rituals

Step-by-step tracking after every project milestone

Positive Psychology Reflection

Templates focused on successes and energy-givers

Onboarding Integration

Fixed starting point · plant your first "tree"

Goal & Development Dashboard

Static overview · proactively rewarded over time

USER JOURNEY

1

Designer wants a promotion →

2

Consults the Backbone in Notion →

3

Shops for courses from the library →

4

Plans milestones in the roadmap →

5

Monthly check-off · watches progress grow

SYSTEM DIAGRAM

Forest Green

Core new steps & structure

Warm Grey

Tracking or neutral action

Mid Green

Reflection or parallel step

Gold

AI-driven or automated action

Essense Green

Enriched / activated element

Bright Green

System link or reference

Eggshell

Contextual note or annotation

The career framework is the primary input — Delivery · People · Added Value structure the backbone, the library, and the roadmap.

INPUTS — set up once, updated annually

essense career framework

Delivery · People · Added Value · 3 discipline tracks · 7 career levels · already in Notion

AI-suggested extra competencies

extra tracks · emerging tools · soft skills · complements the framework

STEP 1 · build the library

pick-and-choose training library — notion

tagged by dimension (Delivery / People / Added Value) · discipline track · role level · time · peer suggestions · browse anytime

STEP 2 · plan your path

visual roadmap — notion + miro

year → month → week · milestone unfolds library resources · adjustable anytime

STEP 3

PD backbone — notion

role curriculum · junior → lead · structured by dimension per level · links to library · enriches existing framework pages · onboarding anchor

Delivery: craft & execution
People: establish & comma
Added Value: company building

STEP 4

track every milestone — notion + slack

5 min form · slack reminder · dimension tag · calendar triggers reflection · data feeds coaching sessions

STEP 5

reflection moments — slack + notion

4 rotating formats · positive psychology · prompts reference dimension focus · auto-saves · aligns with calibration cycle

STEP 6

progress dashboard — notion

growth shown per dimension · career path advances visually · input for coaching + calibration

links to existing system

PD Backbone enriches existing Notion pages · dashboard → shared before coaching + calibration · connects to plan → collect → share → assess cycle

new year → update inputs + roadmap

G: complete scoring data

	Criteria	Concept 1	Conce pt 2	Conce pt 3	Personal preference	Notes			
P1	System synergy	-2	2	-1	C2 - but elements of 1	Concept 1: Team & Social Approach (Interviewee's Favorite)	Concept 2: Micro-learning (Small Chunks)	Concept 3: Role-Specific Program / Curriculum	Overall Feedback on the Systems
	Continuous & Sustainable Flow	1	1	1		High Autonomy: He prefers this option because it avoids forced hand-holding and allows a team to cooperatively decide how to explore development goals.	Forced & Annoying: He compares this approach to Microsoft's "Clippy," noting that it can feel forced, awkward, and strip away the user's sense of ownership.	Logical Design: He finds it very logical for structured career progression, as it clearly defines domain knowledge and training expectations for different levels (e.g., junior vs. senior roles).	Structure Drains Freedom: Overly engineered or heavy systems create a high cognitive load. He notes that by the time you navigate the rigid structure, your brain capacity is already full.
	Lowers effort & administrative friction	-1	1	-2		Social Accountability: The team structure naturally keeps people accountable to their plans because they aren't working in isolation.	Passive Learning Drawback: It relies too heavily on passive learning (reading, watching, listening) rather than applied learning.	The "To-Do List" Trap: He fears this method turns personal development into a superficial checklist where users just mindlessly tick off completed modules without actual reflection.	Keep it Low-Fi: He prefers simple, short bullet points outlining expectations, allowing the employee to use their own critical thinking to map out the journey.
	Guidance	2	2	2		Over-ambition Risk: A primary downside is that teams often set overly ambitious agendas, creating last-minute stress just to report that a task was completed.	Focus Disruption: Because it takes roughly 20 minutes to get into a zone of deep focus, small snippets of information can be incredibly difficult to actually absorb.		Milestone-Driven Reflection: Reflection is best done right after a project milestone is delivered while the experience is still fresh, rather than on a forced, recurring bi-weekly schedule.
	Autonomy	-1	-1	-1					interaction needed: Conversational over Text-Heavy: He highly favors a conversational reflection format (like sparring with an AI agent) over filling out dense walls of text or spreadsheets.
	Goal Deconstruction	1	-1	1					
	Long term engagement & adaptivity	1	-1	-1					
	Business and role alignment	1	1	2					
P2	System synergy	-1	-1	-1	C2 - the automated the better	Concept 1: Social / Mistake-Sharing Approach	Concept 2: Task Deconstruction & Tracking (Interviewee's Preference)	Concept 3: Curriculum / Prescriptive Approach	
	Continuous & Sustainable Flow	-1	1	1		Limited Development Value: While sharing and learning from errors is a good baseline practice, she does not feel it functions as a true personal development path aligned with her future career plan.	Greater Flexibility: She prefers this concept because it feels much more adaptable and customizable than a strict corporate curriculum.	Strips Away Autonomy: She objects to this approach because it removes user autonomy, dictating a rigid path focused entirely on the capabilities the company wants from the employee rather than what the employee	
	Lowers effort & administrative friction	-2	2	1		Ineffective for Practical Skills: She notes that complex behavioral or leadership skills (such as learning how to mentor others) cannot be properly developed simply by listening to project mistakes.	Reduces Administrative Burden: It is highly valuable for automatically breaking down goals, scheduling time, and logging actionable progress, which makes preparation for performance reviews much easier.	Rigid Choices: Even if the curriculum provides a predetermined list of options to choose from, it remains a flaw if none of those choices actually match the user's personal interests or goals.	
	Guidance	1	1	1		Low Practical Utility: Hearing other people's best practices or past missteps feels passive and is not a highly useful way for her to grow compared to hands-on practice.	Need for True Agency: Her primary concern is whether the user retains enough freedom to customize tasks; if the automated prompts recommend a specific format or resource (like a podcast) that does not resonate with her, she simply won't do it.		
	Autonomy	1	1	-2			Project-Goal Alignment: She strongly favors the idea of an AI agent that can analyze her annual development plan and dynamically map those goals onto whichever specific client projects she happens to be assigned to throughout the year.		
	Goal Deconstruction	-2	2	1					
	Long term engagement & adaptivity	-1	1	1					
	Business and role alignment	-2	1	1					
P3	System synergy	1	-1	-1	C3	c1	c2	c3	addition
	Continuous & Sustainable Flow	1	1	1		I think the developing together aspect of option 1 is strong - people with similar goals meeting and discussing	Concept 2 - interesting but I worry about a sea of notifications - easy to ignore and postpone until later....	I like the menu aspect of concept 3 - the 'learning pathways'	I would consider - how does this scale back or forward with seniority - does everyone need the same level of care / guidance?
	Lowers effort & administrative friction	-2	-2	1		the idea of social learning is nicebut this assumes that everyones needs for development are the same - now this forces you to all do the same ; this will make some rise but others be left behind.			
	Guidance	-1	-1	2		A partial idea; it would be nice to give attention to doing something together on essense day but this is not a full sulation just a spark.			
	Autonomy	-1	-1	1					
	Goal Deconstruction	-1	1	2		1. Critique of Concept 1: Shared Learning & Social Accountability	Critique of Concepts 2 & 3: Automated Triggers & Micro-Actions Severe Notification Fatigue: Automated prompts (such as Slackbots or the "Donut" tool) are completely ineffective for Samuel. He filters them out entirely to preserve his focus	The Core Value and Application of Reflection The Best Use of Micro-Windows: If an employee actually finds a spare 15 minutes, Samuel argues the absolute most valuable use of that time is	The Seniority Paradox: Time vs. Deep Thinking The Crunch on Junior Staff: Behavioral theory states that genuine development requires deep, highly focused focus ("System 2 Thinking").
	Long term engagement & adaptivity	-1	1	-1		Subjective Learning Curves: Growth cannot be strictly standardized. Forcing all employees into the same development box ignores the reality that different individuals require entirely different levels and paces of guidance.			
	Business and role alignment	-1		1		The Reality of Workplace Competition: Businesses naturally possess competitive dynamics. Samuel notes that some people will always grasp concepts faster, and a healthy business structure should naturally allow			
						Overly Complex Tech Infrastructure: While the idea of collaborative learning is nice on paper, wrapping it in complex data layers (Notion, Slack tracking, roadmap integrations) introduces heavy administrative friction.			
		-10	10	10		Culture vs. Vulnerability: The interviewer points out that the company culture is filled with high-performing, intensely positive people. While pleasant, this environment accidentally suppresses openness about failures.			

H: User test protocol

Essense PD System — User Test Protocol
Prototype v5 · Graduation research Rosalie van alphen · TU Delft
Duration: ~45/50 min · Method: think-aloud with mid-task scoring · Moderated

Fill in data in the excel ; [beforehand]
Participant: _____
Role / level: _____
Date: _____
Fill in sheet online; https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1exFYmDLfvrH6G4xH8_wOZJDRJgdPpxYEnQ79imZ2Qk/edit?gid=1664633368#gid=1664633368
Score sheet for participant (also added in here) : <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aCp1grm9B8zg85BCLciaX7wvimuTUj9E/edit>

0 Facilitator guide
Structure
Tasks are grouped into five thematic Sections. After each Section, a PAUSE prompts a 60-second scoring moment and one short discussion question. This captures per-feature data without disrupting flow. A full debrief and questionnaire follow all tasks.
Before the session

- Open prototype: notion — start on the PD Hub
- Screen recording ready (with consent), or notepad open
- This document open alongside a blank observation sheet
- Printed or online score sheet send over
- Signed informed consent sheet.

During the session

- Think-aloud: ask the participant to narrate continuously. Remind them if they go quiet.
- Do not intervene, even when they struggle. Note where and how long. Step in only if fully stuck (>3 min).
- Neutral probes only: "What do you expect here?", "What does this do for you?" — never "Don't you understand?"
- You are testing the system, not them. Say this if they apologise.
- At each PAUSE: stop the participant, hand them the rating sheet for that Section, read the discussion prompt. Keep it to 60–90 seconds.

Researcher bias: do not explain features before the participant tries them. Do not ask leading questions. React neutrally to positive and negative reactions alike.

Requirements (of the session) and research questions

Research questions
Main question: How can a structured personal development (PD) deliverable be designed that balances needs and wants from Essense and Eidra's guidelines

1. What are the professional growth desires of Essense employees and requirements from Essense and Eidra in PD that need to be met?
2. What are the current drivers and barriers for Essense employees to actively work on PD?
3. What format of PD deliverable best ensures long-term engagement and adaptivity within Essense's fast-paced, evolving creative environment?

Requirements

- 1.Requirement 1: Continuous, Sustainable Activity The PD system must be continuous and sustainable, effectively bridging the temporal gaps between mid-year and year-end evaluations.
- 2.Requirement 2: Breaking Down High-Level Ambitions: The system must provide a framework to break down high-level ambitions into actionable, short-term, and concrete milestones.
- 3.Requirement 3: Active tracking: The system must enable active tracking and documentation of development plans, objectives, and progress throughout the year.
- 4.Requirement 4 Active reflection: Active reflection on progress, strengths, and weaknesses must be a formal, required component of the PD process.
- 5.Requirement 5 Concrete Suggestions and Examples The system must provide concrete suggestions and examples of development directions and available tools.

1 Introduction to read aloud
"Thank you for joining. Today we're testing a prototype of a professional development system for Essense — designed to help you track growth, reflect, and prepare for coaching, without it feeling like extra work."
"You are not being tested. The system is. There are no right or wrong reactions — confusion is useful data."
"Please think aloud as you use it. Say everything that comes to mind. I'll stay mostly quiet, but I'll pause us after each section for a quick reaction. At the end we'll do a longer debrief."
"The session is around 60 minutes. May I record your screen for my notes? The recording stays with me and won't be shared."
[Wait for consent — note yes/no]
Open the prototype on notion; <https://www.notion.so/eidra/Rosie-Junior-Service-Designer-test-Hub-36a1f15509d8815cac90e602f49973bf>
— start on the PD Hub. Say nothing about what the system does and let them figure it out themselves.

2 Tasks, observations & pauses

Work through the five sections in order. Each Section ends with a PAUSE. Fill in observations during or directly after each task.

Scale: 1 = *strongly disagree / very poor* · 3 = *neutral* · 5 = *strongly agree / very easy*

Section A — Profile & orientation

#	Task	Say to participant	Time
T1	Orientation	Open the PD Hub. Look around. Describe out loud what you see and what you think this system is for. Where would you start?	4 min
T2	Set up your profile	This is your starting point. Set up your profile and tell me what you'd expect Calendar Sanctity to do. Would you switch it on?	6 min

PAUSE — score + discuss Section A score — clarity of the starting point

Score (1–5): _____

Discussion: "In one sentence, what does this system do? And would you turn on Calendar Sanctity?"

Key quote / observation:

Section B — Dashboard

#	Task	Say to participant	Time
T3	Dashboard overview	You want a quick snapshot of how your development is going. Describe what you see. Open the quarter most relevant to you now.	6 min

PAUSE — score + discuss

Section B score — usefulness of the overview (Req 3 / Req 1)

Score (1–5): _____

Discussion: "Does this overview give you something you don't have today? What stands out?"

Key quote / observation:

Section C — Reflection & insights

#	Task	Say to participant	Time
T4	Write a reflection	You want to reflect on the past few weeks. Write a short reflection and choose the format that suits you.	7 min
T5	Add in feedback	You want to add feedback and get an overview. Add what you want and find your way in the overview.	5 min
T5	Check your insights	You want to understand how your PD is going this month. Find this and say what you take from it.	3 min

PAUSE — score + discuss

Section C score — reflection & insight quality (Req 4)

Score (1–5): ____

Discussion: "Would you use the reflection tool in your real working week? What would make you more or less likely to?"

Key quote / observation:

Section D — Goals & actions

#	Task	Say to participant	Time
T6	Break down a goal	You have a development goal you want to split into smaller steps. Do that via the system.	7 min
T7	Log a completed action	You just finished something meaningful in a project. Log it in the system — including how it felt.	5 min

PAUSE — score + discuss

Section D score — goal deconstruction & tracking (Req 2 / Req 3)

Score (1–5): ____

Discussion: "Did that feel like it helps — or like more admin? What made the difference?"

Key quote / observation:

Section E — Learning & coaching

#	Task	Say to participant	Time
T8	Find & share a training	Find a training relevant to one of your goals. Add it to your roadmap. If you've done something already, share what you learned.	6 min
T9	Prepare a coaching session	Your next coaching session is coming up. Use the system to prepare your agenda.	6 min
T10	Free exploration	Go wherever you want. What do you look for next? What surprises you? What did you miss?	4 min

PAUSE — score + discuss

Section E score — learning menu & coaching support (Req 5 / coaching / overall+ system synergy)

Score (1–5): ____

Discussion: "Did the training menu give you options you'd actually consider? And if the system was live tomorrow — what would you use first?"

Key observation:

- 3 Full debrief (open questions)
Ask these in an open ended semi structured interview setup.
- 1.What was your overall impression of the system?
 - 2.What did you find most valuable?
 - 3.What absolutely did not work for you, or felt wrong?
 - 4.Was there a moment where you thought "I don't get this"?
 - 5.Would you use this system if it was available? Why or why not?
 - 6.Which part would you remove first? Which is essential?
 - 7.Something you missed/ would add in this?
 - 8.Time Sanctity — would you turn it on? Any hesitations?
 - 9.Do you think the system actively overcomes the "gap" between check in moments (req1)?
 - 10.Do you feel like this setup (in notion) is most useful? Or would you rather have a separate link for it? (relate to the validation with Essense)

I: User test score and observation sheet

Section	ID	Task & Description	Prompt / Instructions to Participant	Observations/notes	Observations / Notes		Conclusion	Mid-Task Metric to Score (1-5)	Score	Discussion Question & Prompts		Section		ID	Task & Description	Prompt / Instructions to Participant		Observations / Notes			Mid-Task Metric to Score (1-5)	Score	Discussion Question & Prompts	overall conclusion
Section A: Profile & orientation	T1	Orientation	Open the PD Hub. Look around. Describe out loud what you see and what you think this		Uses the link - is not to intent to; does not realize this is not what is intended.		'First usage" steps are needed; unclear how this is meant to be used and how to move along the	Clarity of the starting point	3	In one sentence, what does this system do? And would you turn on Calendar Sanctity?	The user was a bit confused, she had trouble orienting and went trough the system really slowly. Liked the visual aspect but would like	Section A: Profile & orientation		T1	Orientation	Open the PD Hub. Look around. Describe out loud what you see and	start here - where dashboard says this ; creates unclarity,	likes the "did you know"	also happy about the formatting and more visual form ; knows that this is		Clarity of the starting point	3	In one sentence, what does this system do? And would you turn on Calendar Sanctity?	This is a system 2 thinker interprets slowly and seriously he is senior making him si position that he understa
	T2	Set up your profile	This is your starting point. Set up your profile and tell me what you'd expect Calendar Sanctity		She is a bit confused and does not orient easily.	The profile has need to fill in but also it is filled in; unclear what steps to make.	Possibly morf information and combine the overview tabs							T2	Set up your profile	This is your starting point. Set up your profile and tell me what you'd	unclear - in this the system did not work properly and the usage and		time measurig is nice but also pressing; better to put on or off.					
Section B: Dashboard	T3	Dashboard overview	You want a quick snapshot of how your development is going. Describe what you see. Open	click "next" and is inable to go back to the dashboard - orientation is missing . + when	Unclear if she needs to fill in goals or not - where does this come from? Explanation and	Is not concise; suggests that the time filter is different.	Suggested sequence: Goal -> Sub goal -> action [reflection/feedback ?] Focus on granting	Usefulness of the overview (Req 3 / Req 1)	2	Does this overview give you something you don't have today? What stands out?		Section B: Dashboard		T3	Dashboard overview	You want a quick snapshot of how your development is going. Describe	too much information - is that really needed?	next step is unclear - feels like he had to move to reflection and micro actions	Roadmap connected to pillars; this might be dependant on the	too much information; make this way more conseise.	Usefulness of the overview (Req 3 / Req 1)	2	Does this overview give you something you don't have today?	
Section C: Reflection & insights	T4	Write a reflection	You want to reflect on the past few weeks. Write a short reflection and choose the format	Expects to have a goal or something to reflect on here.	Insights are the most valuable part here - nice to have a step made to action/conclusion	Copy action is not usefull	Skip copy option, insights are usefull.	Reflection & insight quality (Req 4)	3	Would you use the reflection tool in your real working week? What would make you more or less likely to?		Section C: Reflection & insights		T4	Write a reflection	You want to reflect on the past few weeks. Write a short reflection	Done earlier already - a lot of questions in one space which gives				Reflection & insight quality (Req 4)	4	Would you use the reflection tool in your real working week? What would make you more or less likely to?	
	T5	Add in feedback & Check insights	You want to add feedback and get an overview. Add what you want and find your way in the overview. Check	Clarity on database. - what is automatised is still unclear.	Insights are the most valuable part here - nice to have a step made to action/conclusion		Growth filterable at Q and also 1/2 year							T5	Add in feedback & Check insights	You want to add feedback and get an overview. Add what you want and	reflection formats do not work properly. Does like the walking -	focus on one question per screen - clear and aimed .	again when referencing to GROW SMART etc - make the refrence clear.	make clear why things are there - collapsible heirarchy				
Section D: Goals & actions	T6	Break down a goal	You have a development goal you want to split into smaller steps. Do that via the	Already opens this in the dashboard - does like this feature; e.g. to help ret to a concrete	Hard to recognize where this goal then appears back.	Copy option is just abundand	: Actions -> goals/sub-goals -> reflection and feedback.	Goal deconstruction & tracking (Req 2 / Req 3)	4	Did that feel like it helps or like more admin? What made the difference?		Section D: Goals & actions		T6	Break down a goal	You have a development goal you want to split into smaller steps.	is tempted to click trough the goal destruction too fast.	regarding growth over time; this is too much ; like the graph and stats but			Goal deconstruction & tracking (Req 2 / Req 3)	4	Did that feel like it helps or like more admin? What made the difference?	
	T7	Log a completed action	You just finished something meaningful in a project. Log it in the system includine	Micro actions are clear	Growth over time -> merge with dashboard; now this is an information overload	Menu ; make dropdown/collapsibl e- now it is just too much of a big information block.	Skip roadmap - has no extra value here.							T7	Log a completed action	You just finished something meaningful in a project. Log it in	it would be great if the datasets are transferable and usable for other	audio reflection is good but did not link trough the points spoken off,	a bit unclear maybe that the goals do not pop up from reflection	stimulate depth especially here my making the information lower				
Section E: Learning & coaching	T8	Find & share a training	Find a training relevant to one of your goals. Add it to your roadmap. If you've done	waardingen / sharing with eachother is unclear ; will this be able to function?	where do ratings come from in the trainings? ; a lot of information.	would like to share the trainings also	Sharing option might be hard to implement yet- will this fuction and where to add this?	Learning menu & coaching support (Req 5 / coaching / overall system synergy)	4	Did the training menu give you options you'd actually consider? And if the system was live tomorrow what would you use first?		Section E: Learning & coaching		T8	Find & share a training	Find a training relevant to one of your goals. Add it to your roadmap.	make concise; the easier the more pofessional; aim for that.	possibly use claude for suggestions directly.			Learning menu & coaching support (Req 5 / coaching / overall system synergy)	4	Did the training menu give you options you'd actually consider? And if the system was live tomorrow what would you use first?	
	T9	Prepare a coaching session	Your next coaching session is coming up. Use the system to prepare your				Shared database with permission to share regarding coaching							T9	Prepare a coaching session	Your next coaching session is coming up. Use the system to prepare your	Overload of information; again. - try and merge when possible,	better - goal/action - add to calander instead of copy option ; why would	better to make collapsible; honest tool - nice to have a graph but also make					
	T10	Free exploration	Go wherever you want. What do you look for next? What surprises you?	unclearly regarding what is shared and what is not.			i con for more information; make the whole thing more consice							T10	Free exploration	Go wherever you want. What do you look for next? What surprises	coaching; what do you want to show your coach? make easier too.			simplify everything ; aim for easy so that it becomes more smooth and				
Section	ID	Task & Description	Prompt / Instructions to Participant		Observations / Notes			Mid-Task Metric to Score (1-5)	Score	Discussion Question & Prompts		Section	ID	Task & Description	Prompt / Instructions to Participant		Observations / Notes			Mid-Task Metric to Score (1-5)	Score	Discussion Question & Prompts		
Section A: Profile & orientation	T1	Orientation	Open the PD Hub. Look around. Describe out loud what you see and what you think this	'Proof" of usage e.g. tracking and providing a	Likes the time sanctity - easy to use.			Clarity of the starting point	5	In one sentence, what does this system do? And would you turn on Calendar	This participant has a system for this herself and that was really	Section A: Profile & orientation		T1	Orientati on	Open the PD Hub. Look around.	quick to orient - very natural to			suggested; feedback + reflection --> actions &	Clarity of the starting point	4	In one sentence, what does this system do? And would you turn on	super fast thinker; leans towards system 1. Gets
	T2	Set up your profile	This is your starting point. Set up your profile	likes the did you know and the quick										T2	Set up your profile	This is your starting	adores the time sanctity,	really likes the interaction	focus on usefullsnes s and					
Section B: Dashboard	T3	Dashboard overview	You want a quick snapshot of how your	Really clear that the reflection and	One step further; profile tracking -	would like to have the Q1Q2Q3 periods too.	This user is really enthausiastic ; she loves	Usefulness of the overview (Req 3 / Req	5	Does this overview give you something		Section B: Dashboa	T3	Dashboa rd overview	You want a quick snapshot	as the only one; likes the	wants the roadmap to link	informatio n is too scattered, .		Usefulne ss of the overview	5	Does this overview give you		
Section C: Reflection & insights	T4	Write a reflection	You want to reflect on the past few weeks. Write	she gets this and is hyped				Reflection & insight quality (Req 4)	4	Would you use the reflection tool in your real working week? What would make you more or		Section C: Reflectio n & insights		T4	Write a reflectio n	You want to reflect on the	normally does not do	reflection does not move to a	copy option is unclear	Reflectio n & insight quality (Req 4)	35	Would you use the reflection tool in your real working week? What		
	T5	Add in feedback & Check insights	You want to add feedback and get an	creates a goal directly from the feedback;	does not click on create a new goal; sometimes									T5	Add in feedback & Check	You want to add feedback and get an	insights are very usefull. would like	informatio n into concrete steps are						
Section D: Goals & actions	T6	Break down a goal	You have a development goal you	unclear how they get the goals; mainly				Goal deconstruct ion & tracking (Req 2 / Req 3)	4	Did that feel like it helps or like more admin? What made the difference?		Section D: Goals & actions		T6	Break down a goal	You have a developm ent goal	this section is a bit small	growth over time is nice but	likes the connection to	merge growth over time	Goal deconstr uction & tracking (Req 2 / Req 3)	5	Did that feel like it helps or like more admin? What made the	
	T7	Log a completed action	You just finished something	Add a goal to micro action or the other	connection to SMART GROW is	use of i and refrence tab. What to click								T7	Log a complet ed	You just finished something	does not really use this							
Section E: Learning & coaching	T8	Find & share a training	Find a training relevant to one of your	Love the training menu and the external	likes the sharing and rating of trainings -		See how to optimize the system now. What can be	Learning menu & coaching support (Req 5 / coaching / overall system synergy)	5	Did the training menu give you options you'd actually consider? And if the system was live tomorrow what would you use first?		Section E: Learning & coaching		T8	Find & share a training	Find a training relevant to	find a resource is a nice	It remains to be a bit small	possibly to link to coaching		Learning menu & coaching support (Req 5 / coaching / overall system synergy)	2	Did the training menu give you options you'd actually consider? And if the system was live	
	T9	Prepare a coaching session	Your next coaching session is coming up	Unclear how the permission is asked for	Tracking is automatic which is nice.									T9	Prepare a coaching	Your next coaching session is	coaching could be useful							
	T10	Free exploration	Go wherever you want. What do you look for		flow suggestion; slowly dive deeper into	the why for this is immediately seen - might	Due to the fact that the participant was doing							T10	Free explorati on	Go wherever you want.								150

J: AI statement

In this AI statement the various ways of AI usage in this graduation project are laid out. Please note that the output of these AI's is supportive, used never as a base solely as a tool. When the AI tools are used with the purpose of improving writing; note that nothing is written by the AI but the suggested improvements (x) are taken into account to generate improvements myself. The only time when the improvements are taken on directly (still with careful revision) is when the spelling and grammar check is applied (4).

As the final deliverable is created with the usage of Claude AI - a more elaborated statement can be found with the full content given to Claude to create full clarity on the usage of this program.

With this a note must be made; the choice to use Claude was deliberate. The company desired implementation of AI and specifically Claude to create a synergy between newly integrated systems. This choice is further elucidated in the thesis. Besides, the potential influences of the AI usage on the report are described in detail in the discussion section.

Usage of AI in writing/ process

1. Grammar/spelling check

AI used; Gemini

Used for; Improving grammar, spelling and overal writing

Prompt used; For the following piece of text improve spelling and grammar, leave my words as written as much as possible.

1. Goal checking

AI used; Gemini

Used for; Checking if the goal of research, design, proposal etc is met

Prompt used;I would like you to check if in the following paragraph of text, the following question is answered: " X " note why this is and is not done.

1. Language elevation

AI used; Gemini

Used for; Elevate language

Prompt used;I would like you to propose synonyms for the verbs in this alineaa
I would like you to provide a synonym for X / antonym for Y
I am looking for an academic term for describing [example; a system that steers/ leads/ nudges a certain desired behaviour - answer here; behaviour scaffolding]

-
2. Meeting summary

AI used; Gemini

Used for; transcribing meetings, filtering , filter action points and concrete steps

Prompts used

I would like you to create a transcript of the following audio fragment (imported). Please create key take-aways and main points of feedback. Additionally, please make concrete action points for me from this.

After this I sometimes missed specific points and asked the AI to elaborate or asked it a question, this would be in the form of;

I am missing the points on red threat through the thesis, could you give me more specific notes on this?
[This is an example, it depended on the meeting notes what and if something was asked]

1. transcript

AI used; Gemini

Used for; Creating a transcript of the pilot interview done

Prompt used;I would like you to create a transcript, with user recognition, for the put in audio file.

"input= mp3.audio"

1. Transcript (2)

AI used; Gemini

Used for; Creating transcript
Prompt used;

"Create a transcript of the attached audio recording. Name the interviewer Rosalie and the interviewee E(1-8). Any other names mentioned should be referred to as P1, P2, etc." (ENG)

Maak een transcript van de bijgevoegde audio opname. Noem de interviewer Rosalie en de geïnterviewde E(1-8). Alle namen die verder worden genoemd kunnen P1,P2 etc worden genoemd. (NL)

Additionally the audio file is send with these instructions

J: AI statement

AI used; Gemini	
Used for; Creating a mock interview for analysis	
Prompt used; I would like you to create a transcript use speaker recognition, do this for the following interview guide;	
“Interview guide”	
I have done a pilot interview, you can use this as an example but do not mimic the responses. The actual interview will be done with employees, the pilot is done with someone outside of the company. Here is the pilot transcript:	
“Transcript of the pilot”	
Make a transcript. Only ask a question if it is not already answered before. Make sure all the questions are answered but nothing is asked "double".	
Also tell me if done like this, what the estimated time the interview will take would be.	
1. Article check	1. Co-creation Idea formation
AI used; Notebook LM	AI used; Gemini
Used for; Checking if what I am searching for (literature review) is in the article before reading	Used for; Creating pointed ideas from the bulk of ideas and clusters created by the co-creation and myself.
Prompt used;Is this article going into the subject of " X " ? In what depth? Is this one of the main focuses? If not, what is?	Prompt used; I have created pillars for a co-creation session; Input ; PILLARS From these a set of ideas were clustered into overarching idea - themes.These are inputted here; Input; Ideas and clustering from miro I structured these under the pillars set. The clustering was done twice. I would like you to combine the two clusterings done ; to suggest overarching ideas that fit under the pillars. Base this on the clusters and themes already there please. I want you to include as much as possible from the ideas and clusters - if you exclude anything please explicitly note this. After this was created- I adjusted the ideas to fit the outcome of the system and embed the nuances of the session. This was utilised to quicken this process not to generate new ideas - just to structure it.
If needed to find a relation; Is this article saying anything about the relation of "X" and "Y"? Is this article saying anything about the of "X" and "Y"?	1. Theory check
1. Mock interview creation	AI used; Gemini
AI used; Atlas.ti	Used for; Choosing a correct theory base Prompt used; I have the following behavioural phenoma/barrier/eabler input; Found behaviour I am in doubt what domain this suits to - i was thinking domainA or domainB . Could you give me a reason for using both and why to not do so (also for both) After this was created- I adjusted the ideas to fit the outcome of the system and embed the nuances of the session. This was utilised to quicken this process not to generate new ideas - just to structure it.
Used for; Coding and summarising as extra input for analysis	1. critical agent
Prompt used; None - inserting transcripts and goals from interview guide	AI used; Claude; Gemini Used for; Choosing a correct theory base Prompt used; I want you to act as if you are my coaches in my meeting. The meeting is a progression meeting; I am graduating from the study strategic product design TU Delft. I want you to be very critical. In the project memory you can see my thesis so far and the graduation manual (for expectancy on the project). Please use this to tell me what is weak and what could use improvement. After this was created- I adjusted the ideas to fit the outcome of the system and embed the nuances of the session. This was utilised to quicken this process not to generate new ideas - just to structure it.
Ai Options uses used; - Summarize (only as adaption to own conclusions) Concept search: to see what is the frequency of the concepts coming up. Intentional ai coding : put in what you want the ai to search for. I used these questions based on the interview guide: What is the background information of the employee How is personal development defined by the employee What does the employee think about personal development now, are they satisfied or not? What does the employee think about the current personal development system now, How does the employee define personal development goals Is personal development tracked and reflected upon?	I would like to have a discussion with you on the thesis and specific parts on it. Please give me feedback and help me improve.
Is personal development rewarded and acknowledged? Are there consequences on working on it or not? Is working on personal development an automatic and low effort activity or does it require active thinking and focus? How is feedback handled and how is this perceived?	
Is there a felt freedom to make mistakes and “fail”?	
Do employees feel a sense of freedom to explore and develop?	
Does the employee feel like there is room for growth and do they believe they can grow competences? Does the employee feel like their role and identity influences their personal development?	
What is desired for personal development?	

J: AI statement

System setup and Claude programming (Deliverable)

AI used; Claude

Used for; Creating an elaborated AI statement on Claude usage for prototype

Prompt used;
I need you to write an ai statement explaining how i have created this system/prototype in Notion - Can you create this for me? You can find the information on this in this project (Essense PD system) - so this is the created system (prototype in notion).
This is for an AI statement - please make it rigorous and make clear how I used this and what information I gave you/ how I created this system with you and what your role in this was specifically.
The full statement for the prototype can be found here;
AI Use Statement
Note: This statement was generated by Claude (Anthropic) to provide a complete and accurate overview of the role AI played in building the Essense PD prototype. All content reflects the actual working process and has been reviewed and approved by the researcher.

1. Introduction

This statement describes the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the development of the Essense PD prototype, which was built as part of this graduation thesis. The AI tool used throughout the project is Claude, a large language model developed by Anthropic. Claude was used as a design and development assistant — functioning primarily as a discussion partner and technical executor — across the architecture, build, and iteration phases of the prototype. It is important to note that all decisions throughout the project were made by the researcher. Claude did not autonomously determine the direction, scope, or content of the system. Every output produced with AI assistance was reviewed, evaluated, and either approved or revised by the researcher before being incorporated into the prototype. Nothing was adopted without deliberate human consideration.

2. Role of Claude as a Discussion Partner

Claude was used throughout the project in the manner of a technically capable discussion partner rather than an autonomous agent. Crucially, every phase of work began with the researcher providing a detailed explanation of what she wanted to create — the system's purpose, its structure, the logic behind each component, and the requirements each part needed to meet. Claude's role was to receive that explanation, ask clarifying questions where needed, and then help translate the researcher's vision into a working system. The researcher would then evaluate the output, push back where needed, and provide further direction. This iterative loop — researcher defines and explains, Claude builds, researcher reviews and steers — was the consistent working pattern across the entire prototype build. Claude did not independently introduce design choices, theoretical frameworks, or structural decisions. All conceptual grounding — including the choice of Concept 2 (Effortless PD), the 4% rule, the application of Human-Centered Automation and Nudging Theory, the mapping to the Essense career framework, and the identification of which modules and features the system needed — was determined by the researcher prior to and during conversations with Claude. Claude's role was strictly to translate those decisions into concrete, functional outputs. Where multiple implementation approaches were possible, Claude presented options; the researcher chose.

3. System Architecture and Notion Infrastructure

The three-layer architecture of the prototype — a shared Notion data layer, a personal Hub per employee, and an agent layer — was conceived and specified by the researcher. The researcher defined what data the system needed to store, how employees would interact with it, how it connected to the Essense career framework, and what the Hub needed to contain for each user. Claude was then used to implement this architecture directly in Notion via the Model Context Protocol (MCP), a set of connectors that allow Claude to read from and write to external tools such as Notion. The shared Notion infrastructure includes two reference databases: the Essense career framework database (containing 154 rows across 15 competences and 7 levels) and a training menu database (containing 30 curated items). The researcher specified the structure and content requirements of both databases and provided the underlying career framework data. Claude was used to set up the database schemas and populate them accordingly. Each employee's personal Hub consists of five linked databases: Goals, Micro-actions, Reflections, Feedback, and a PD time log. The researcher determined which databases were needed, what properties each should have, and how they should relate to one another. Claude built the database schemas and Notion page structure based on those specifications.

4. Interactive HTML Artifacts

The system's user interface consists of twelve interactive HTML artifacts embedded inline in Notion via iframes, covering the following modules: Dashboard, Reflection, Goals, Tracker, Insights, Training menu, Coach prep, Coach overview, Growth, Budget, Profile, and Breakdown. The decision to use HTML artifacts embedded in Notion — rather than native Notion pages or another interface approach — was made by the researcher, as was the identification of which modules the system required and what each one needed to do. Before each artifact was built, the researcher provided a detailed brief specifying the purpose of the module, the functionality it needed to include, the information it should display or capture, and how it should connect to the rest of the system. Claude then wrote the artifact as a standalone HTML file based on that brief. The visual design — using the Essense brand identity (forest green #044524, essense green #579B7A, eggshell #FAF0DB, yellow #FFC502, DM Sans and DM Serif Display typefaces) — was specified by the researcher and applied consistently by Claude across all twelve artifacts. After each build, the researcher reviewed the artifact in detail and provided specific, actionable feedback; Claude revised accordingly. This cycle repeated across multiple versions until each module met the researcher's requirements. The artifacts were deployed to Vercel (<https://pdwessense.vercel.app>) via a GitHub repository (rosalievanalphen-del/PDforessense). The Vercel configuration was also set up by Claude, including the necessary header settings to allow Notion iframe embedding. The researcher owned the GitHub account and Vercel deployment; Claude produced the code and configuration files.

5. Agent Layer and Prompt Flows

The prototype includes an agent layer consisting of nine Claude prompt flows. These are pre-written prompts embedded within the system that guide users through specific PD activities — such as deconstructing a goal into micro-actions, preparing for a coaching conversation, or generating a reflection. The prompts were designed collaboratively: the researcher defined the intent and expected output of each flow, and Claude drafted the prompt language, which the researcher then reviewed and approved.

6. Iteration and Quality Control

The prototype was built through multiple rounds of iteration. After each build phase, the researcher conducted a walkthrough of the system and produced a structured list of issues, corrections, and new requirements. Claude then implemented the changes and the cycle repeated. This process ran across at least three major feedback cycles, each producing a revised version of the prototype (v1 through v4).

At no point did Claude introduce changes outside the scope of what the researcher had specified. Where the researcher's instructions were ambiguous, Claude asked clarifying questions before proceeding. All architectural and design decisions were explicitly confirmed by the researcher before implementation. The researcher also made manual adjustments to the Notion Hub directly (for example, re-embedding iframes after page rewrites), which Claude could not perform autonomously due to technical constraints of the environment.

7. What AI Did Not Do

For the avoidance of doubt, the following were not produced using AI assistance and fall outside the scope of this statement: the conceptual design process (ideation, concept development, and concept selection). Furthermore, Claude did not access any external data sources beyond what the researcher explicitly provided, did not make decisions on behalf of the researcher, and did not produce any output that was incorporated into the prototype without the researcher's review and approval.

8. Summary

Claude (Anthropic) was used as a technical assistant and discussion partner in the construction of the Essense PD prototype. Its contributions span system architecture design, Notion database setup, HTML artifact development, Vercel deployment, and prompt flow authoring. All work was directed by, and remained under the control of, the researcher at every stage. The researcher reviewed and approved all AI-generated outputs before they were incorporated into the prototype. The use of AI in this project is consistent with the role of a skilled technical collaborator: it accelerated implementation and enabled a level of prototype fidelity that would not have been achievable within the project's timeframe otherwise, while all intellectual ownership of the design and its decisions remains with the researcher.