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A. Interview questionnaire business unit

Opening (2-3 minutes)
1. Role in the Process: Could you describe your role in the organization and how you were involved in the recent strategy process? What were your responsibilities? (Gives insights into their perception of their role, and what they are supposed to do in the strategy process)
2. Responsibility: Which team members were involved in the strategy process? How did you divide the responsibilities among your team? (Map the collaboration between each team and their responsibilities)

Experience and Learnings from the Strategy Process (8-10 minutes)
3. Strategy definition: What does "strategy" mean for you? (to understand if strategy means the same for everyone, and if they can articulate what strategy means)
4. Purpose: In your view, what is the purpose of the strategy process? (is intended purpose the same as actual purpose)
5. Overall Experience: How would you describe your experience with the strategy process? (What did they think of the strategy process) -> potential for asking more specific questions
6. Clarity: Was it clear which steps had to be followed to get to the strategy output? (Clarity of the process, was more guidance necessary) -> Did you require more guidance? (follow-up)

Cross-Collaboration Learnings (5 minutes)
7. Experience of Collaboration: How did you experience cross-collaboration during the strategy process? With Functions, Segments and MPUs? (Did the cross collaboration actually happen? Or is their need to improve on touch points? With BS&MS, BUs, Countries, MPUs, functions)

Reflections on the output (5 minutes)
8. Key topics/elements: What are the key elements/topics covered in a Business Unit strategy? (Key strategy elements in a strategy document)
10. Reflection: Have you reflected on the strategy since the strategy development process was concluded? What was the outcome of that reflection? (Is it a static document or does it change over time?)

11. Output playing an active role: What kind of role does the created strategy, play in your day-to-day business? (Is the strategy document used in the day to day? Do people check their activities to align with strategy?)
12. Execution: How are you executing the strategy defined in the process? How are you tracking the execution? (What is their way of executing, are they actively executing the strategy, and how do they track?)

Communication of the strategy output (3 min)
13. Regional Communication effectiveness: How did you communicate the Business Unit strategy output to your teams? And to the organization? (Do people know the strategy? Should people know the strategy? How did they communicate this to their own Business Unit)
14. Global Communication effectiveness: How effective was the communication of global strategy? (global effectiveness of communication)

Closing (5 minutes)
15. Final Learning: What was your most significant learning from participating in the strategy process? (Open question, what did they find most valuable?)
16. Additional Thoughts: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience? (Open question, speak their mind)

B. Interview questionnaire market segment

1. Role in the Process: Could you describe your role in the organization and how you were involved in the recent strategy process? What were your responsibilities? (Gives insights into their perception of their role, and what they are supposed to do in the strategy process)

2. Responsibility: Which team members were involved in the strategy process? How did you divide the responsibilities among your team? (Map the collaboration between each team and their responsibilities)

Experience and Learnings from the Strategy Process (8-10 minutes)

3. Strategy definition: What does "strategy" mean for you? (to understand if strategy means the same for everyone, and if they can articulate what strategy means)

4. Purpose: In your view, what is the purpose of the strategy process? (is intended purpose the same as actual purpose)

5. Overall Experience: How would you describe your experience with the strategy process? (What did they think of the strategy process) -> potential for asking more specific questions

6. Clarity: Was it clear which steps had to be followed to get to the strategy output? (Clarity of the process, was more guidance necessary) -> Did you require more guidance? (follow-up)

Cross-Collaboration Learnings (5 minutes)

7. Experience of Collaboration: How did you experience cross-collaboration during the strategy process? (Did the cross collaboration actually happen? Or is their need to improve on touch points? With BS&MS, BUs, Countries, MPUs, functions)

Reflections on the output (5 minutes)

8. Key topics/elements: What are the key elements/topics covered in a market segment strategy? (Key strategy elements in a strategy document)

9. Timeline: How long does a strategy development process typically take for a market segment? (Their expected/envisioned process)

10. Reflection: Have you reflected on the strategy since the strategy development process was concluded? What was the outcome of that reflection? (Is it a static document or does it change over time?)

11. Output playing an active role: What kind of role does the created strategy, play in your day-to-day business? (Is the strategy document used in the day to day? Do people check their activities to align with strategy?)

12. Execution: How are you executing the strategy defined in the process? How are you tracking the execution? (What is their way of executing, are they actively executing the strategy, and how do they track?)

Communication of the strategy output (3 min)

13. Communication effectiveness: How did you communicate the market strategy output to your teams? And to the organization? (Do people know the strategy? Should people know the strategy? How did they communicate this to their own Business Unit/Business Segment)

14. Communication effectiveness: How effective was the communication of global strategy?

Closing (5 minutes)

15. Final Learning: What was your most significant learning from participating in the strategy process? (Open question, what did they find most valuable?)

16. Additional Thoughts: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience? (Open question, speak their mind)

C.   Interview questionnaire strategy & transformation

Opening (2-3 minutes)
1. **Role in Development:** Could you describe your role in developing the strategy development process and templates? (Gains insight into their level of involvement and perspective.)

Understanding Strategy in the Organization (5 minutes)
2. **Definition of Strategy:** What does "strategy" mean to you, and how do you think it is understood across the organization? (Explores their views and perceived organizational alignment on strategy.)
3. **Role of Strategy:** What role do you think strategy plays in this organization? (Clarifies their perspective on the importance of strategy.)
4. **Definition of bottom-up:** What does "a bottom-up" approach mean to you?

Reason for Developing the New Process (5 minutes)
5. **Motivation for Change:** What prompted the development of this new strategy process? (Explores the rationale for change.)
6. **Challenges with Previous Processes:** Were there specific challenges or gaps in the previous process that you aimed to address? -> Which problems is this new process supposed to solve? (Highlights the problems the new process is intended to solve.)

Optimal Output for the Strategy Process (5-7 minutes)
7. **Purpose of the Output:** What do you see as the primary purpose of the strategy process or output from the strategy process? (Explores their vision for the deliverables.)
8. **Characteristics of Success:** What does a successful strategy output look like to you? (Identifies their criteria for evaluating the process's success.)

Reflections on Strategy and Process Design (5-7 minutes)
9. **Vision for the future:** What is your vision for how the strategy process should evolve in the future to better serve the organization's needs and goals? (This encourages insights into their aspirations and potential improvements for the process.)

Closing (3-5 minutes)
10. **Final Reflection:** What do you think is the most valuable aspect of the new strategy process? (Encourages them to reflect on the impact of their work.)
11. **Additional Thoughts:** Is there anything else you would like to share about the development or implementation of this process? (Open-ended, allows them to elaborate on areas not covered.)

D. From idea to concept

Ideation approach

To generate a diverse range of ideas from multiple perspectives, creative workshops have been conducted. These workshops are designed based on Heijne & Meer (2019) book, *Roadmap for Creative Problem Solving Techniques*, as well as insights from Pasman et al. (2011) on interaction vision workshops.

The first workshop will focus on the problem-finding phase, using an interaction vision to explore key challenges. Together with students, the desired future state will be explored. This results in a set of H2s, that will be further used in the second creative session. The second workshop will center on analogy-based idea generation using Artificial Intelligence, leveraging these H2s to develop potential solutions. Synthetic stakeholders will be used to represent the perspectives of the different departments in the strategy process.

Once all ideas have been generated, they will be clustered into three groups, each representing a different solution space. From these clusters, initial concepts will be created.

Following discussions with the S&T team, the most promising concept from each phase was selected for further development. To refine these concepts, 12 evaluation sessions were conducted, allowing for multiple iteration and improvement steps.

The following chapter provides a detailed breakdown of each step in this process.
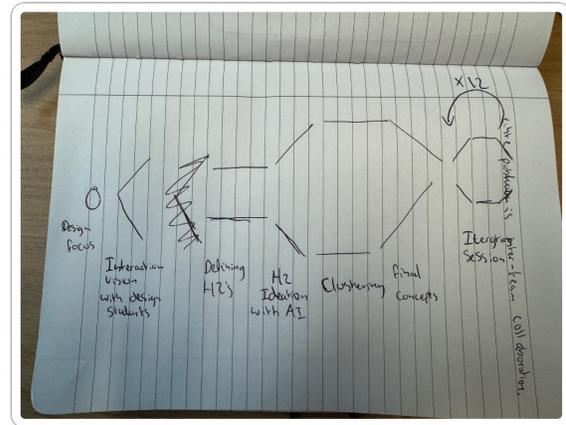
Interaction vision session

Flow of the session

An interaction vision is created that envisions a desired future interaction in the strategy process. This desired future is used as inspiration to create analogies, which in turn, sparks creativity to develop creative solutions to the design challenge (Pasman et al., 2011). This workshop is done with 3 design students.

Session Goal:

Exploring the design domain and gain inspiration for creative H2s.

A presentation was prepared to introduce the workshop structure and provide context on the design challenge. Visual materials, including post-its, A3 paper and pens were organized to facilitate the session. Participants were encouraged to

keep an open mind and hold back any criticism during the initial stages. Before starting the presentation, they were invited to write down any ideas that might come to mind, even during the introduction.

The session began with an overview of the problem context, followed by a clear explanation of the design challenge. After this, the interaction vision was introduced to set the creative tone for the workshop. The meaning behind the key terms in the interaction vision was explained to ensure everyone had a shared understanding.

Participants were then tasked with individually generating analogies or metaphors inspired by the interaction vision. Each person selected their favorite analogy and presented it to the group. While one participant shared their analogy, the others noted down any qualities and characteristics they associated with it.

Once all participants had presented their ideas, the group collectively discussed the qualities and characteristics that had been gathered. These were clustered into groups based on their similarities and each cluster was given a meaningful label.

After forming the clusters, the design challenge was revisited. Using the clusters as inspiration, participants generated new ideas aimed at addressing the challenge. The qualities and metaphors served as creative triggers, guiding the group toward

fresh and innovative concepts.
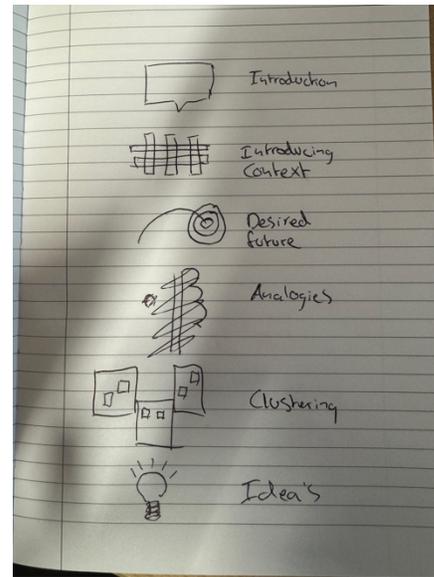
Interaction vision

The interaction vision of **"Catalyzing Shared Wisdom"** was chosen because it aligns closely with the desired future state of strategic collaboration. Inspired by Pasman et al. (2011) approach to interaction vision workshops, the vision was developed using the analogy of a **shipwrecked group on a deserted island**, where survival depends on teamwork, knowledge-sharing and leveraging each individual's unique skills and qualities. This scenario reflects the essence of effective strategic dialogue. Diverse stakeholders must collaborate, pool their expertise and co-create solutions.

Catalyze

Catalyze

To make something start happening or start being successful

Shared

Experienced by more than one person

Wisdom

Quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement.

Insights from session

The ideation session was a great way to get creative insights into the H2s of the design challenge. Based on the ideas and clusters generated in this session a set of 5 H2s were generated. I made sure to use interaction quality terms in the H2 that could spark creative analogies for the next round.

How to:

Design for "open" & "supportive" collaboration

Foster "trust-building" interactions

Make the process "Engaging" & "empowering"

Ensure "Clarity" & "fluidity"

Build "rewarding(encouraging)" feedback loops

Analogy-based H2 ideation

Synthetic stakeholders

To overcome the challenge of stakeholder unavailability in the ideation workshops, synthetic stakeholders were introduced as AI-generated personas. These synthetic stakeholders were designed to simulate the perspectives, priorities and thought processes of key stakeholders. The decision to use synthetic stakeholders was driven by the desire to include multiple viewpoints from Business Units, Market Segments and Multi Plant Units. All these stakeholders had distinct areas of focus but were difficult to get together in the same room. It was not necessary to completely represent the people in the process but I wanted to create a group with different perspectives.
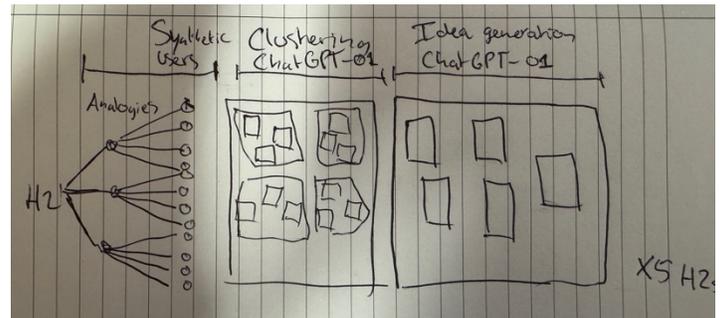
To better understand the creation and use of synthetic stakeholders, discussions were held with experts in the field. Eric Gu, a PhD candidate at IDE and founder of Ailixr, provided insights into AI-driven stakeholder modeling and multi-agent AI interactions. Ailixr specializes in creating AI-driven workflows that facilitate structured multi-model interactions. He gave me access to Ailixr to use for my creative session. Additionally, another expert on synthetic users shared expertise on how to create synthetic personas to get the best results. These conversations played a crucial role in refining the

development of synthetic stakeholder profiles.

Four generic stakeholder profiles were created, important to note is that these profiles do not represent specific people. They only create a profile for the type of functions in an organization. Based on the following details, ChatGPT was asked to create a full background story for each of the stakeholders. Including elements like, what they like to do in their free time and how they talk.

Global Segment manager – Jerry

- Interested in products
- Innovation driven
- 20 years experience
- More creative than analytical
- Global perspective, sees the bigger picture

Manufacturing Plant manager – David

- Loves efficiency
- Very analytical focused
- Direct and factual
- Everything grounded in data
- No-nonsense

Regional manager – José

- Leading a large team
- Responsible for financial performance
- Effective use of time
- Operational experience
- Strong market knowledge

Global Product manager – Johanna

- Likes to focus on detail

- Young professional
- Broad education
- Concrete and actionable mindset
- Likes innovation

Flow of the session

One synthetic user started by creating an analogy based on the H2 statement. Afterwards, a stakeholder would generate 1 quality or characteristic based on this analogy. Next, this quality or characteristic together with the analogy would be the input for the next synthetic user. This user would add another quality or characteristic on top of this. At the end, for each analogy there would be 4 qualities or characteristics per analogy.

Next, using ChatGPT-o1, clusters were made of the qualities and characteristics from the 3 analogies.

After all characteristics were made, they were clustered using ChatGPT-o1. Next, 5 ideas were generated based on these clusters.

Insights of the session

Ideas

At the conclusion of the AI-driven ideation session, a total of 25 ideas were generated, with five ideas produced for each of the five H2 questions. Each idea maintained a clear connection to the analogies and the clusters of qualities and characteristics identified during the workshop. The use of analogies proved to be a powerful tool, as it stimulated creative thinking and guided the ideas toward innovative directions. This output provided a strong foundation and valuable inspiration for the subsequent phase of concept development.

Reflection

Reflecting on the process, my experience with Large Language Models (LLMs) in ideation was not entirely new. Two years ago, I co-wrote a paper titled "ChatGPT as a Co-Designer: Too Good to be True?", which explored the role of AI in creative processes. Combining AI with the analogy-based ideation method in this project was a positive experience, as it reinforced the potential of LLMs to unlock creativity in early-stage design processes.

That said, working with synthetic stakeholders proved to be more complex and time-consuming than anticipated. During the process, I identified a critical limitation in the use of LLM-powered synthetic stakeholders for ideation. This was later validated by expert feedback. Since Large Language Models are trained on generalized datasets, the synthetic stakeholders, despite being designed to represent distinct roles (e.g., Product Manager, General Manager, Operational Expert, Segment Manager), tended to provide similar answers. Even when the agents were instructed to stay within their defined knowledge scope, they continued to pull from the broader knowledge base of the model. This reduced the uniqueness of their contributions.

Additionally, the current Ailixr platform lacked functionality for synthetic stakeholders to collaboratively cluster ideas or build upon each other's inputs in a more dynamic way. This limited the ability to fully replicate the organic back-and-forth discussions that typically occur in human workshops.

Despite these limitations, the raw idea output from ChatGPT-4o was still valuable as creative input and a source of inspiration. The diversity of ideas generated, demonstrated the potential of AI as a creative support tool in early-phase ideation.

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity for further research to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of synthetic stakeholders in design and ideation processes. Exploring how these AI agents could be made more role-specific and how multi-agent systems could better collaborate in generating and clustering ideas would help unlock their full potential in the future.

Concept creation

Based on the set of ideas generated through AI, concepts were generated that fit in the context of the full design challenge. Ideas from different H2 questions were combined to create integrated concepts that addressed the design challenge. Based on the H2 ideas, 3 groups can be made for different phases of a future solution.

Clustering ideas

Clustering the ideas generated during the ideation process revealed three recurring solution spaces that addressed the core issues in the strategy development process. These three solution spaces are closely connected to the design challenge and reflect the moments where improvements are needed.

Preparing the teams

The first solution space is preparing the teams. It focuses on making sure that all participants are well-informed before attending a strategy session. As defined in the design goal, **Set the stage**, stakeholders from the previous strategy cycle mentioned that a lack of preparation led to unproductive discussions and inefficient use of time. Teams often arrived at sessions without a clear understanding of the key topics or the necessary background information. This solutions space looks at how to best prepare teams for discussions and create a shared understanding.

Organizing stakeholders

The second solution space is called organizing stakeholders which focuses on bringing the right people together at the same time. This is closely linked to the **Support Bottom-Up** design goal. Support Bottom-Up emphasizes the importance of involving multiple stakeholders, including regional representatives, to move away from a top-down approach. However, gathering these participants is challenging, as they are often senior leaders with busy schedules and are spread across different countries. Aligning their availability is complex and time-consuming. Finding an efficient way to organize and group these stakeholders while minimizing disruption to their schedules is crucial to ensure their participation and input.

Facilitating session

The third solution space is called facilitating the strategy session. This focuses on ensuring that the time spent together leads to real progress toward a shared strategy. This is closely linked to the **ignite collaboration** and **growth mindset** design goals. The session should encourage active collaboration where stakeholders build on each other's input rather than simply presenting updates. It should also foster a learning mindset, where participants are open to new ideas and willing to let go of outdated assumptions. Clear structure and guidance on discussion topics are essential to keep the session focused and

prevent it from becoming repetitive or unproductive.

Concept selection

For each of the solution spaces, different concepts were developed. The concepts were evaluated during an in-depth discussion with the strategy & transformation team. Based on the organizational context, the best fitting idea per solution space was chosen to develop further. The following rough criteria were used to select the concepts:

- What is the impact of the concept?
- How well does it fit in the current process?
- How feasible is it in the organizational context?

The concepts: **Preparation templates**, **Speed-date** and **Strategy session** were selected. The exact content and flow of the concepts were to be further developed through iterative evaluation sessions with stakeholders.

Iterative evaluation sessions

Key internal stakeholders and external experts were individually invited to refine and evaluate the final concepts. After each session, the concepts were adjusted, resulting in a total of 12 iteration cycles. Three types of stakeholders were involved in this process, each providing unique input: internal users, internal experts and external experts. The concept presentations were tailored to each group, focusing on gathering the most relevant insights from their specific perspectives.

Over time, the concepts became more concrete with increasing clarity on the exact content and steps involved. The key improvements from these evaluations were:

1. Defining the preparation topics that would best equip teams for productive discussions.
2. Specifying which individuals should participate in the strategy session to ensure the right expertise and perspectives.
3. Narrowing down the session topics to those that would deliver the most value within a 2-hour timeframe.
4. Clarifying the desired outcomes from the strategy session to ensure clear next steps.

An important element that resurfaced during evaluations was the need for clear leadership guidance. This was referred to as a "leadership umbrella", emphasizing the importance of top-level direction and expectations being clearly communicated to all teams.

Based on advice from an external expert, the internal preparation process was limited and simplified to prevent teams from arriving at rigid strategic conclusions beforehand. Instead, participants were encouraged to "bring ingredients, not cakes" to the discussion. Offering relevant input without pre-made decisions, ensured the session remained open to collective exploration.

The speed-date organization concept was positively received as an innovative and time-efficient approach. However, the evaluations emphasized that alignment should initially happen at the director level across the three departments, rather than expanding participation to a broader group. In the future, more stakeholders could be involved. There was even a suggestion to include external stakeholders such as customers in the strategic discussions.

The strategy session concept initially centered around value proposition discussions but was refined to focus specifically on competitive advantage based on customer needs. This gave the session more structure and direction. Additionally, adding the customer-centric approach created a way to build a common cause mindset, which was seen as crucial. Several stakeholders highlighted that cross-departmental

discussions on competitive positioning were currently missing from the strategy process, making this adjustment particularly valuable.

Internal users x5	Internal experts x4	External experts x3
• User perspectives • Experience last process • Understand value gained	• Organize complexities • Specific challenges & opportunities	• Outside-in view • Relevant experience • Comparing to other organizations

Presenting concept

Stakeholder perspective

Detailed validation

Who should be involved?

Detailed validation

What should be discussed?

Detailed validation

Iterate x12