

## **Barriers to and Facilitators of Implementing Design Thinking as an Innovation Methodology**

**Anja Svetina Nabergoj**

University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, Slovenia  
*anja.svetina@ef.uni-lj.si*

**Anastasia Liakhavets**

University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, Slovenia  
*anastasialiakhovets16@gmail.com*

**Andrei Petukh**

University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, Slovenia

**Blaž Zupan**

University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, Slovenia  
*blaz.zupan@ef.uni-lj.si*

*Abstract.* Continuous performance improvement is a necessity for company survival in a modern highly competitive global business environment. Becoming design-oriented is one of the things companies and other organizations are seeking more and more frequently. They believe that establishing a work environment where creativity is encouraged as a long-term process will lead to significant benefits. That is one of the reasons why Design Thinking has attracted considerable attention in the business literature as a methodology that helps companies overcome challenges and issues caused by the promotion of innovations and growth. The process of Design Thinking has been the key to the success of many high-profile, global organizations like IBM, Apple, and Airbnb that have owned it to noticeable effect. This approach is taught at leading universities around the world and is encouraged at all levels of business. However, the researches do not provide full evidence of the impact Design Thinking can have on organizations. Despite increasing progress of this method, the evidence indicates that firms face implementation challenges of Design Thinking based user-centered approach to innovation.

During the study of the theory concerning Design Thinking, many approaches to the process were found, as well as many different interpretations of the methodology. The authors used the Design Thinking process created by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design. In order to better understand the essence of Design Thinking, the authors studied the practice of applying this approach to companies.

A descriptive approach using existing literature was used as a forerunner to exploratory research. It was necessary to have a clear understanding of what is happening before the authors asked questions about why and how it is happening. Secondly, the authors used the qualitative research method, which is primarily exploratory research. To collect necessary data, the authors used semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect stories, emotions, and pain points. Authors conducted 12 in-depth interviews and all respondents were Slovenian representatives of larger companies. Further, the data collected from the interviews was transcribed and analysed. Later on, all findings were used to create implications as well as to make a final conclusion.

Multiple challenges forced the researcher to redefine the structure of barriers and facilitators multiple times. Eventually, the final structure consisted of six categories of barriers and facilitators:

- Individual,
- Management- and Leadership-related,

- Organizational Structure and System,
- Creativity of Output,
- Innovation Process,
- Communication system.

Also, authors evaluated different units for the estimation of the barrier or facilitators significance. Ultimately, they came up with two metrics:

- total number of interviewees who just mentioned a particular factor (barrier-facilitator pair),
- the number of unique experiences for each given factor estimated as several individuals who experienced a positive/negative side of a factor.

Authors validated barriers and facilitators of Design Thinking implementation in organizations that have already been discussed in the literature, and additionally, they also discovered potential new barriers and facilitators.

*Keywords:* innovation, creativity, design thinking