Using hypotheses to hold together your learning, thinking and making

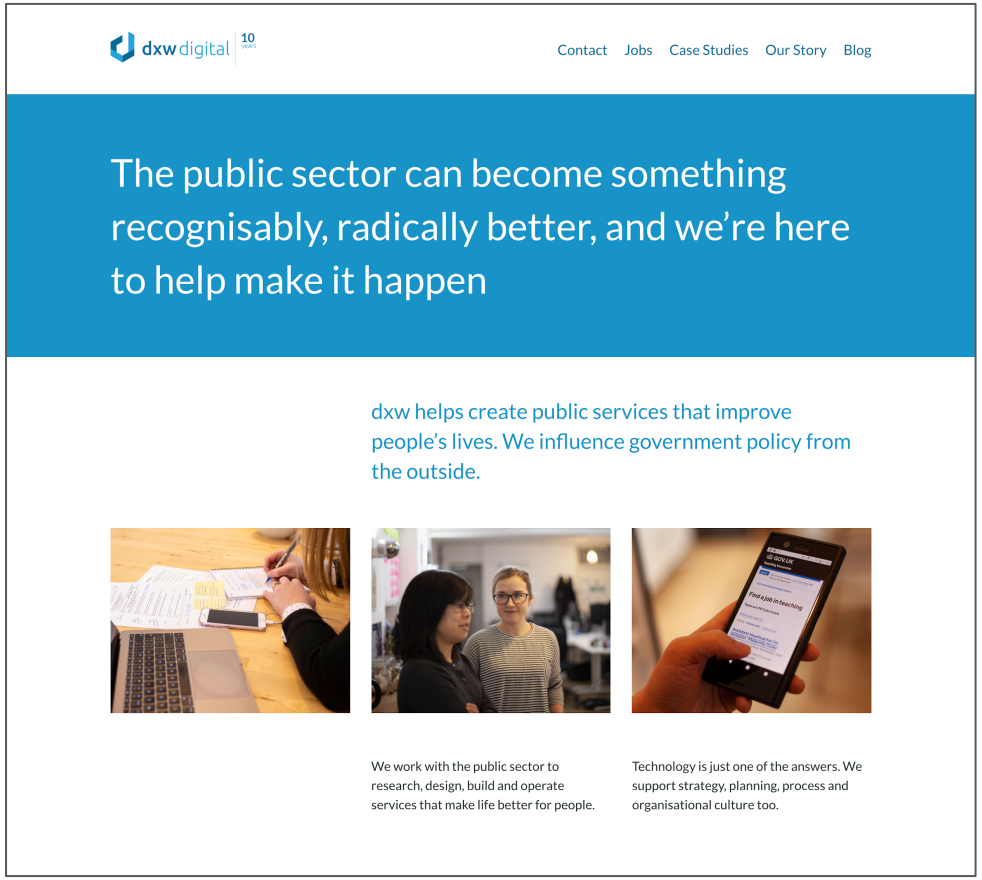
Interaction 20, Milan

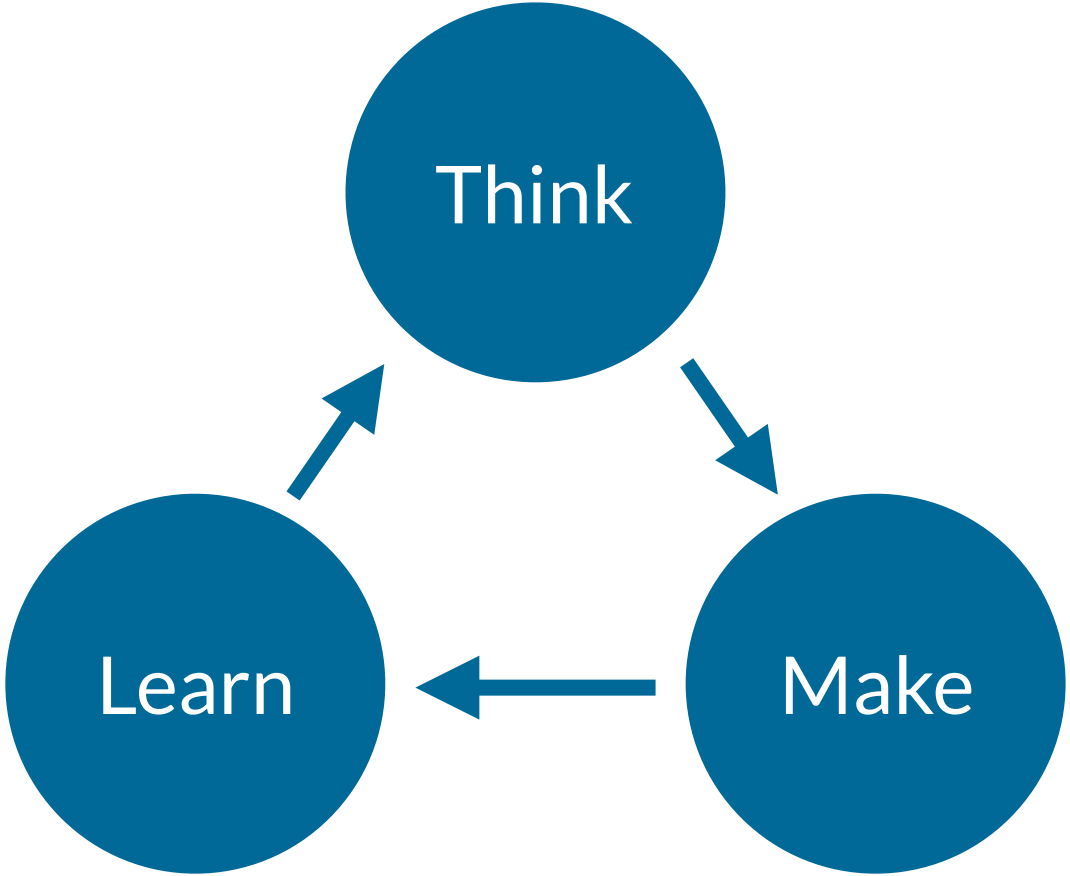
Friday 7 February 2020

dxw digital

20 IXDA

John Waterworth
Head of User Research
@jwaterworth




Think
Learn
Make

Hypothesis

Because [research findings]
we believe [improvement idea]
will achieve [desired outcome]
measured by [performance indicator]

Hypotheses can be the glue that holds together our learning, thinking and making

Good hypotheses depend on several other practices

Practices that organisations can be struggling to do well

If you want to introduce hypotheses you need to get those other practices working well first

Problem

Work starts without clear, agreed outcomes

Hypothesis

Because [research findings]
we believe [improvement idea]
will achieve [desired outcome]
measured by [performance indicator]

Example brief

We need an online portal for people to fill in feedback surveys

Solution

Ask questions in a structured way to reshape poorly defined briefs into clear and valuable outcomes

Example outcome

More and better feedback that we can use to improve our services

Possible performance indicators

Proportion of users giving feedback

Proportion of feedback that’s useful to improve services

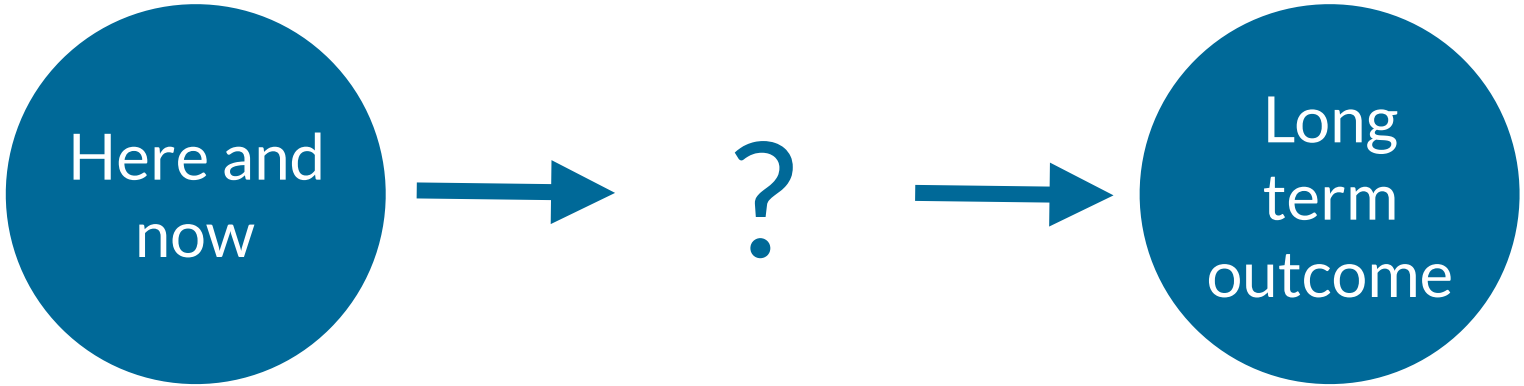
How to Re-Shape Projects (without antagonising people)

Kate Tarling

2018.nuxconf.uk

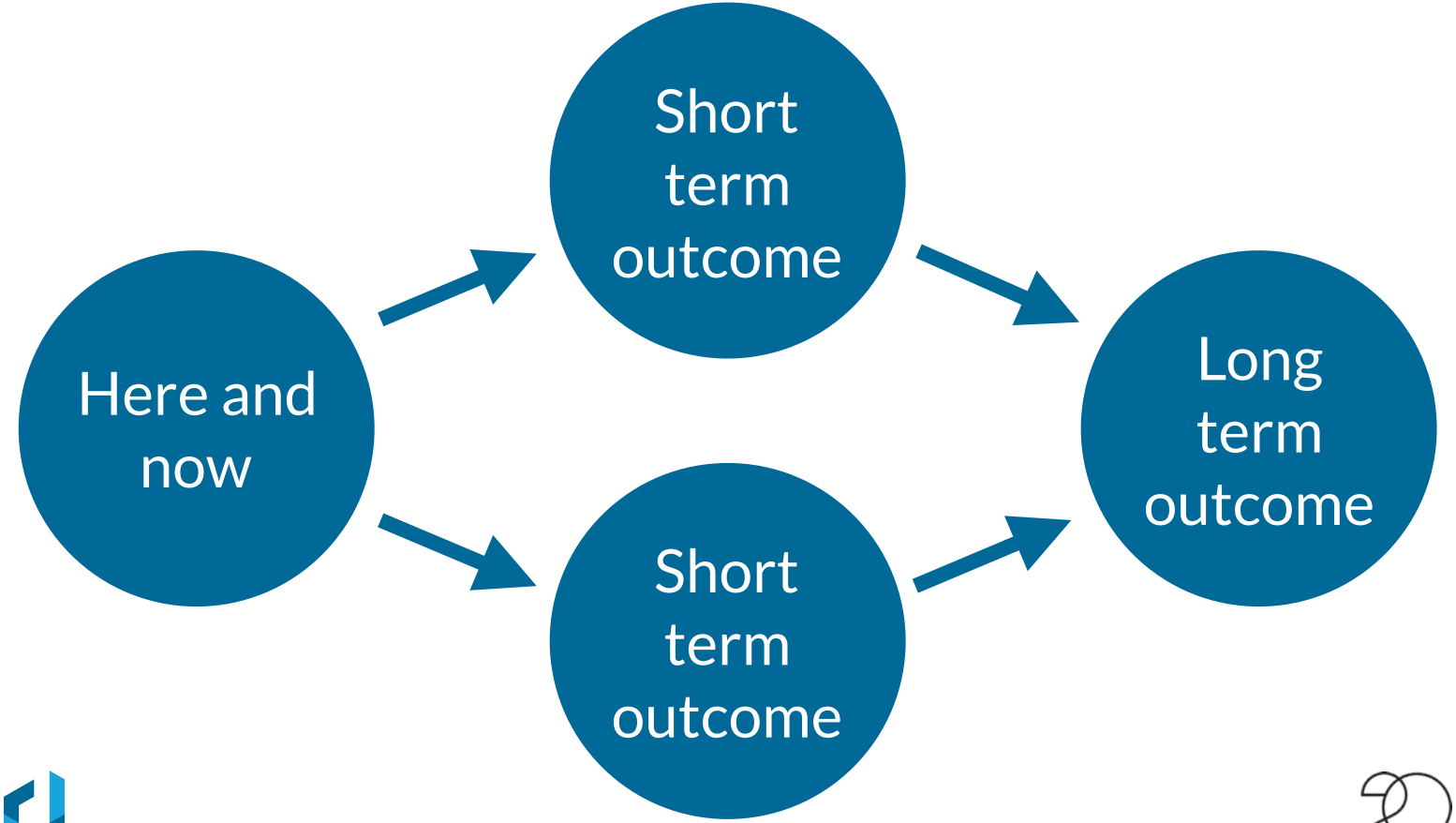
Problem

Outcomes are too big for any practical hypothesis


Here and now
?
Long term outcome

Solution

Break down the long term outcome into a number of achievable and measurable short term outcomes


Here and now
Short term outcome
Short term outcome
Long term outcome

Example long term outcome

More and better feedback that we can use to improve our services

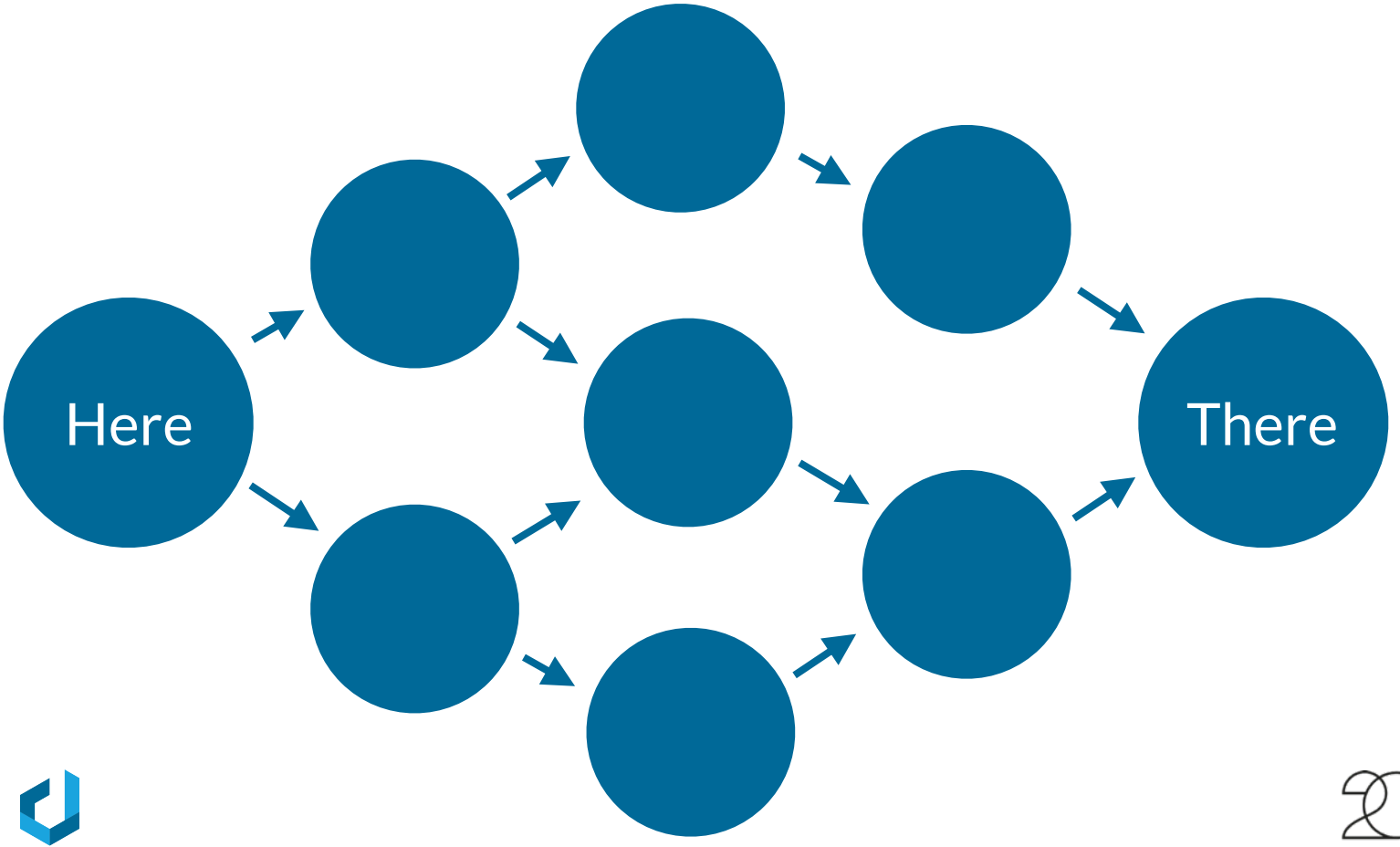
Possible short term outcome

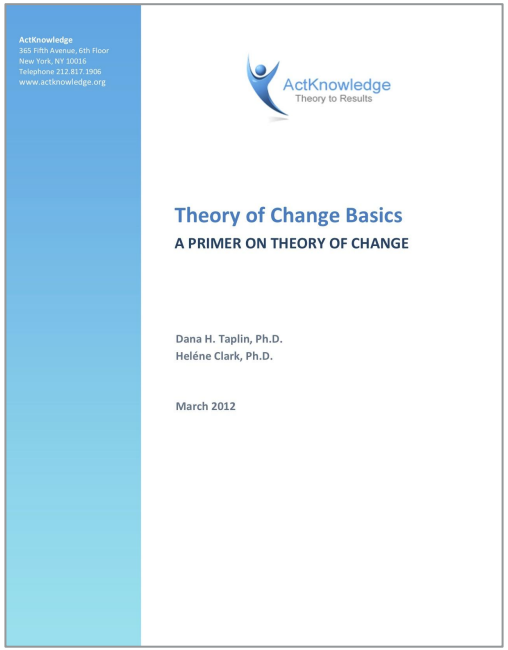
Make it easier to give feedback so fewer people dropout

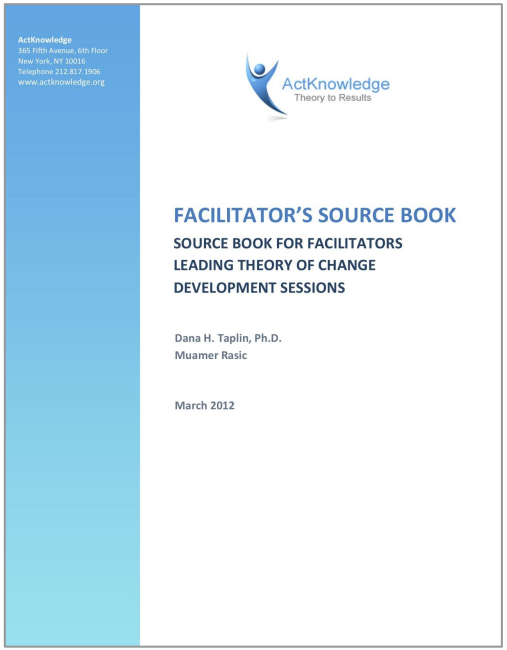
Theory of change

"… description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen …"

www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/


Here
There





Center for Theory of Change

theoryofchange.org

Problem

Most user research is rapid usability testing

Test
Issues
Backlog

Hypothesis

Because [research findings]
we believe [improvement idea]
will achieve [desired outcome]
measured by [performance indicator]

Research findings

Distilled statements of the important things we've learned

Research findings (insights)

"... a provocative statement of truth about human behavior ..."

".. 'big rocks' of innovation: statements about the future to hang your design hat on."

Jon Kolko, Trusting the Design Process
www.jonkolko.com/writingProcess.php

Solution

Agree the most important things the team needs to learn, then look for the simplest ways to get good answers

Might be

Starting usability test sessions with more open interviews

Visiting your users' homes and workplaces to run tests in context

Erika Hall
abookapart.com/products/

Stephanie Marsh
koganpage.com

Problem

Weak analysis means research produces observations not findings

Observations

Findings

Decisions and actions

Solution

Researchers run good, regular analysis sessions with the team that produce useful findings

Examples

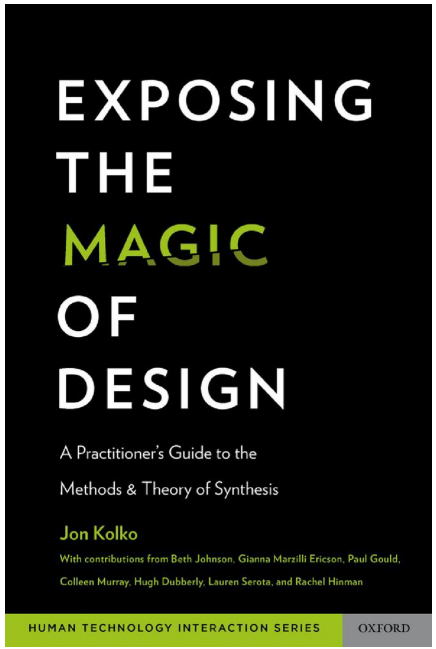
People are motivated to give feedback to improve the service

The current registration step is a significant barrier

It’s important to everyone that feedback is from real users

Other services have good lightweight authentication

We have good contact details for users



Indi Young
indiyoung.com/pubs-apps/

Jon Kolko
www.jonkolko.com

Why is collaborative analysis so important?

Vita Mangan

September 10th, 2019

> Unseen research is wasted research – Gregg Bernstein

Analysis which turns research data into valuable findings a team can act on, is the most important part of what we do as user researchers. But tends to be the least visible and least understood.

You can have well designed research questions, conduct lots of research, and do it well. But without enough and proper analysis, you won't see the impact you're hoping for. That detailed research report or slick journey map might just end up collecting 'digital dust'.

At dxw digital, we believe that research is a team sport. And co-analysis is a big part of that.

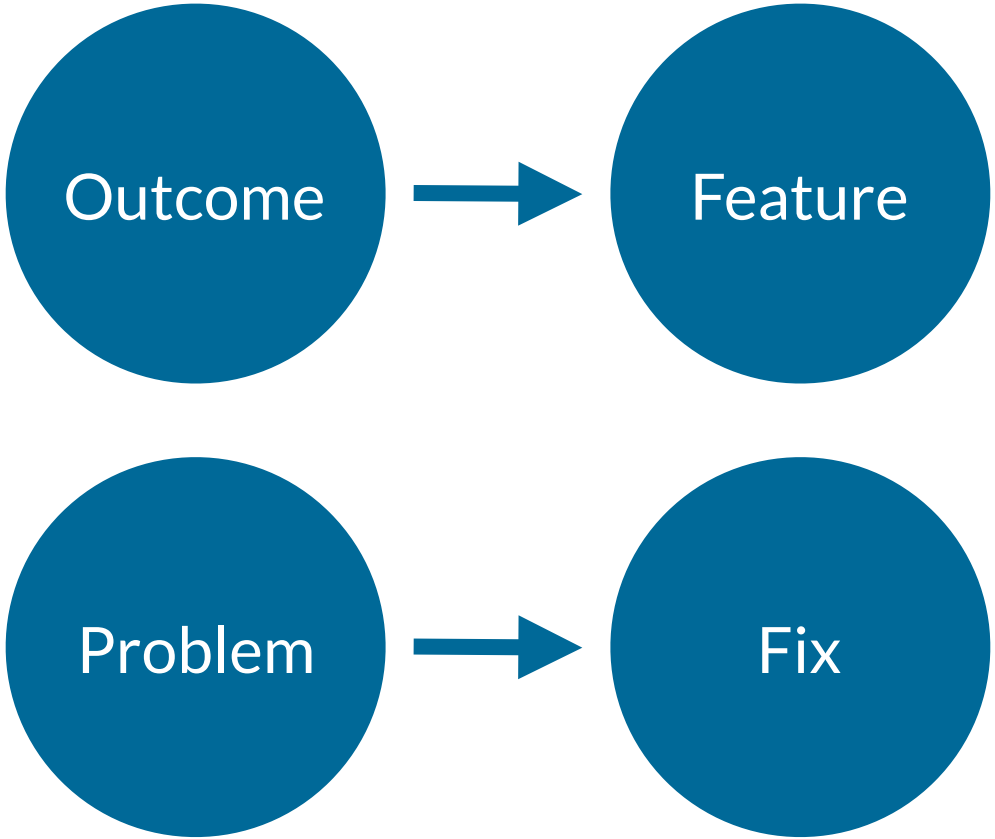
Vita Mangan

dxw.com/blog

Problem

Only one idea allowed

(and no failures)


Outcome
Feature
Problem
Fix

Hypothesis

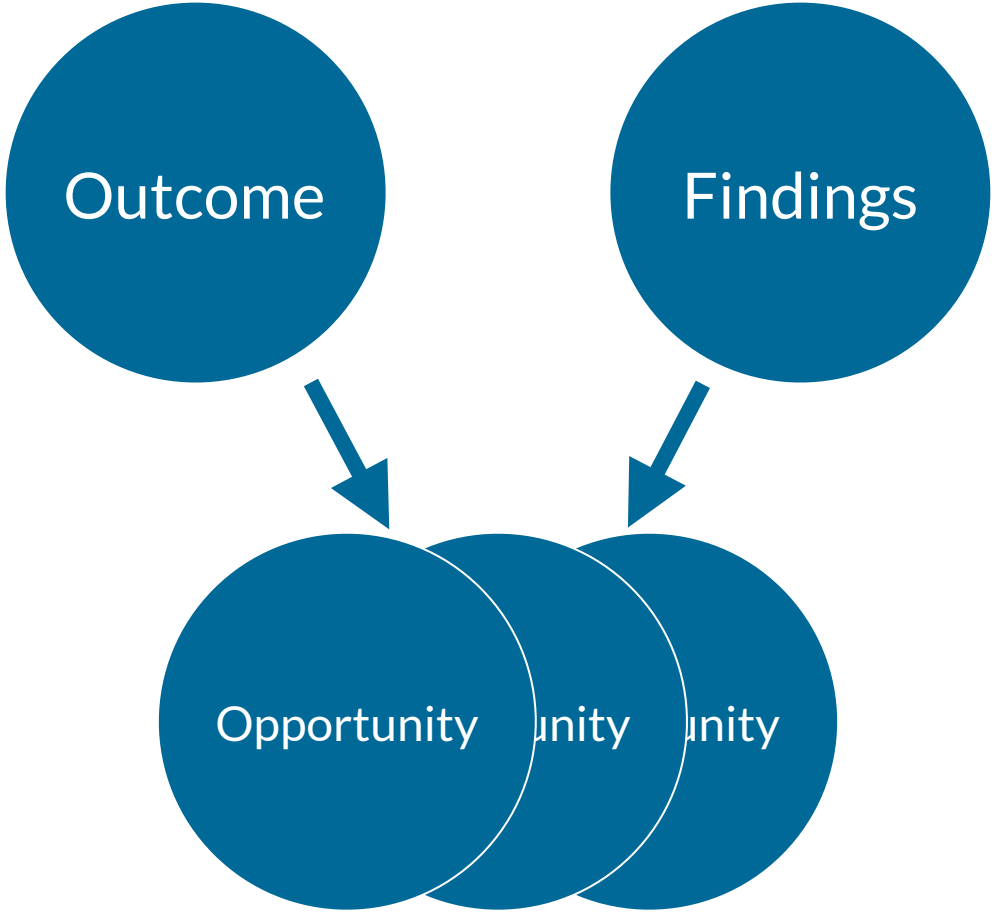
Because [research findings]
we believe [improvement idea]
will achieve [desired outcome]
measured by [performance indicator]

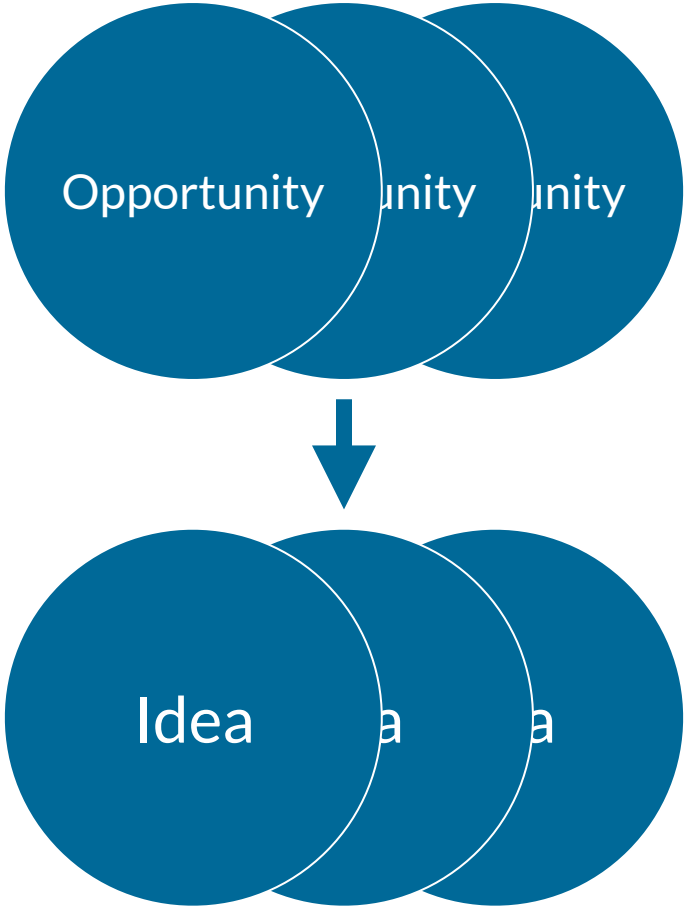
Solution

Open up some space to create and try out lots of improvement ideas

Opportunity solution tree

Teresa Torres
producttalk.org


Outcome
Findings
Opportunity


Opportunity
Idea

Example opportunity

Replace the problematic registration with a lighter weight authentication

Possible improvement ideas

Generate and send a unique code in the feedback invitation

Confirm contact details and check against records

All the ingredients for a good hypothesis

Example long term outcome

More and better feedback that we can use to improve our services

Possible hypothesis

It's important to everyone that feedback is from real users
but the current registration step is a significant barrier

We believe that replacing the problematic registration step
with a simple confirmation of contact details

Will make it easier for people to give us feedback

Which we'll measure by the numbers of dropouts in the feedback process

Theory of change for introducing hypotheses

Before adopting hypotheses …

Does work start with clear and valuable outcomes?

Are outcomes an actionable size?

Are teams producing solid and useful research findings?

Do teams have the space to create and try out different improvement ideas?

Thanks!

dxw.com
@dxw