

WHITE PAPER

DEMYSTIFYING LEGAL DESIGN THINKING

NEOTA LOGIC

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What is Legal Design Thinking?

Legal Design Thinking seems to be a trending term in the sector over the last few years but what does it actually mean?

At Neota we approach the term as a combination of legal expertise, design and visual thinking. Fundamentally, it's about a human-centred approach is behind solving a legal problem.

By adopting this process, you can not only help identify and solve problems, but you can also gain a better understanding of how an overall process works and how to make improvements.

The Legal Design Thinking Process

Here's the situation: you have a blank sheet in front of you and some thoughts about a problem you want to solve, but that's about it. How do you properly scope out the problem? How do you make sure you don't bite off more than you can chew? How do you make sure that the project is aimed in the right direction and stays on target?

These are all concerns that can be clarified by following these steps:

1. Define your end goal

Every project should start with a clear and concise goal. It may seem obvious, but having a clear goal is not always easy. When starting a project, people are often eager to jump right into a shiny new tool or a new hire before looking at the bigger picture.



When defining the goal of your project, it's a bit like Goldilocks' porridge. Too broad and the project could collapse from lack of direction and confusion. Too narrow, and the project will struggle to offer the level of service that the user is looking for. It needs to be just right – somewhere in the middle of these two. So, take some time to consider the goal at the beginning. Consider why you are undertaking this project, what the underlying purpose of the project is, and what higher level efficiencies can be achieved.

Ultimately, the goal should be expressed in a single sentence. Once you've got your goal, it will be a useful anchor to reference throughout the project. If you notice things are starting to sprawl away from the goal, reassess the direction of the project and either drive things back to the goal or decide whether the goal needs to be changed to fit the new direction. Either way it will be your guiding light as the project progresses.

2. Identify your audience

Legal design thinking puts users ahead of lawyers or designers. Empathy is key here; you need to be empathetic to the end user but it's important to truly understand who that will be.

At a very high level, processes should be viewed as ongoing relationships between users and the product or service you are looking to provide. In order for the process, product or service to be successful, people will need to use it, and want to use it. So the user is number one.



Are they lawyers? Are they technologists? Are they in the pro bono space? Is it the general public? Are they internal or external to your organization? There's a whole host of elements that need to be considered when thinking about your audience. Once you've narrowed your audience down it will help you make important decisions down the road. By identifying your audience, you can better understand what would motivate them to use the service you are trying to deliver, everything from the type of language you use, to what terms you define, to the color scheme you choose.

Once you've identified your audience try to involve them in the whole planning process: ask them what they need, co-create with them, test with them, ask for feedback, observe them using it and bring them along on the ride to truly understand what it is they need.

3. Generate ideas

Once you've identified that end goal and who it is you want that end goal to help, then you can set about generating ideas for achieving that goal.

The Design Council states that "In all creative processes a number of possible ideas are created ('divergent thinking') before refining and narrowing down to the best idea ('convergent thinking'). When doing this you should try to involve all key stakeholders in a brainstorming session and come up with creative ways of taking something complex and making it simple for the end user.

Once you've developed a set of ideas – both good and bad – you can then evaluate, which means carefully considering the viability of how it will work in practice, the desirability of whether people want a solution to this problem and the feasibility of whether it can be achieved with the available resources.

You might identify that you need a digital solution in order to achieve your goal but sometimes a process improvement or simply better communication is required.

4. Establish the output

You need to have a clear sense of what the user will walk away with after using the process or service that you are designing. For example, Will the user be sent a report? Require an email with more information? Need to take further action away from the environment that you have provided? Be explicitly clear on the end product or service that the user will receive. This may seem similar to the goal, however, the difference is that the goal is the overarching purpose you're looking to achieve, whereas the output is more of a tangible outcome. For example, a project goal could be that you're looking to streamline your client intake process or provide more consistency in the documents generated by your corporate legal staff. The outcome of these goals could be an app that assesses a user's legal needs and triggers an email to the appropriate practice group, or an app that generates, sends out, and tracks NDAs.

The goal will drive the project, thinking about the audience will shape the tone and delivery of the app, and the output will give you something tangible to work towards. With these elements clear in your mind, it becomes a lot easier to join the dots between them and create a meaningful process.

5. Prototype

Once you've refined your ideas and decided on what the output might look like, you always need to prototype and build the process structure. What's interesting here is looking at the different ways of building the structure. At Neota, we often use the 'how to make toast' analogy because this is a great way to discover how different people will look at a problem, and what's important to them as an individual. This is the concept of asking a group of people to draw how they make toast. It will surprise you how wildly different these drawings will be, from some simply drawing a toaster with bread in it, to someone drawing a wheat field and the early stages of how bread is made. This process truly highlights the areas important to different people and will, therefore, help to define what needs to be built into the structure of the process in order to serve these different individuals.

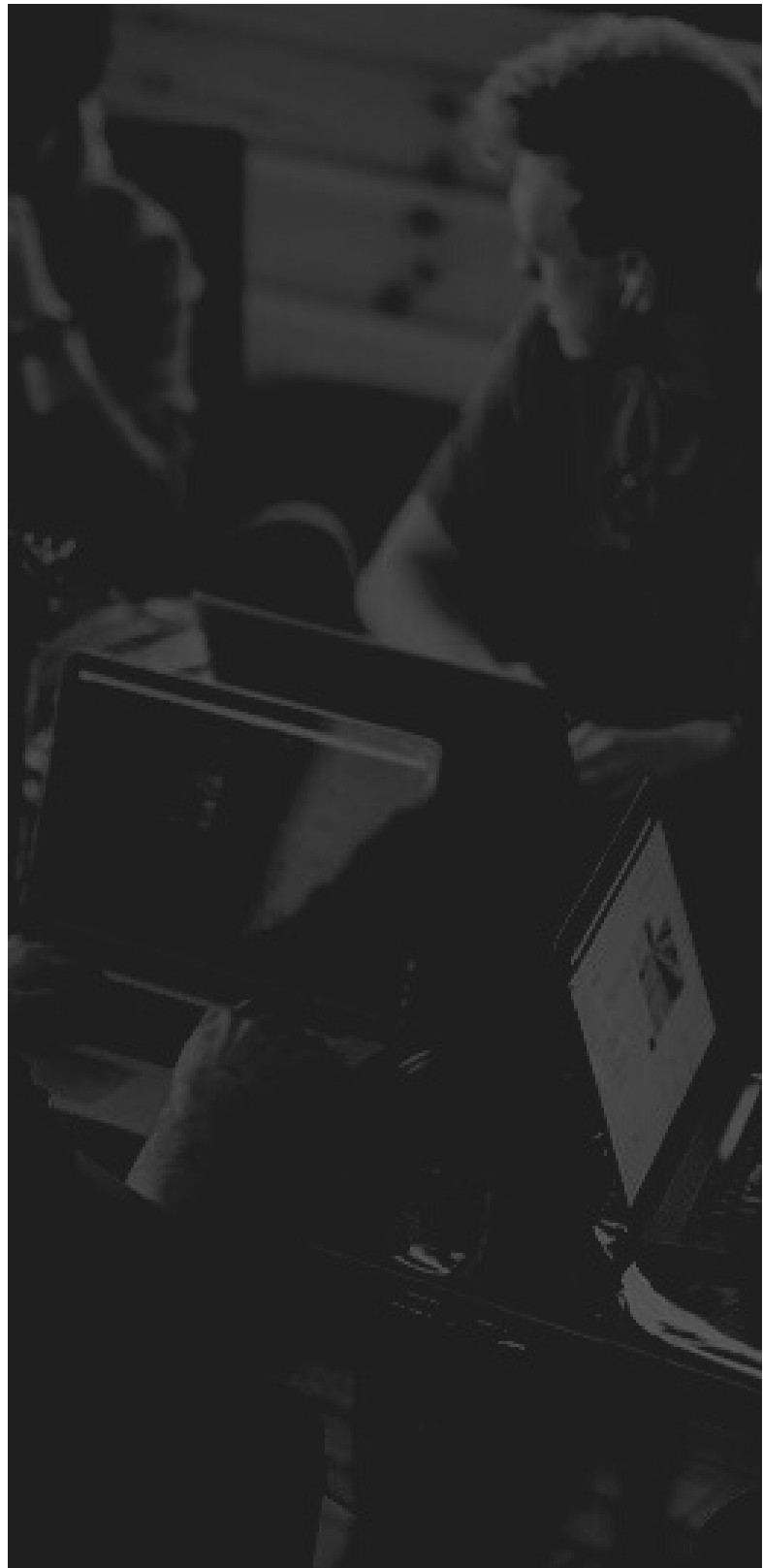
Building a successful service or process is iterative. There should be a continuous cycle of evolution. Users provide feedback and some things will work better or worse than expected. Trial and improvement are big parts of the journey. Once you've figured these things out, you'll be a lot closer to building and deploying a well-designed service.

By following these stages you'll have a strong vision for the project and clear guidelines to point to as it develops. The outcome will be a user-centred solution that may not have been apparent before undergoing this design thinking process.

Neota Logic & Legal Design Thinking

Once you have established points 1 – 4 this is a great time for Neota Logic to come in and help you prototype, after all your planning we streamline the building process so you can move faster from ideation to deployment.

As a no-code automation platform, Neota Logic allows those who have never developed an app before to engage in the software development process. For many people, this is an incredibly empowering and exciting introduction to a world traditionally walled-off by complex coding languages and years of school. On the other hand, as with any new skill, app development can be intimidating at first. This is something we see our customers go through every day, especially during our Intensive legal design & ideation workshops. Attendees are both excited to see their apps blossom from an idea to a real product, and slightly overwhelmed from not knowing how to take the first step on a new project.



When designing legal apps in the past, law was a one-to-one business between the lawyer and the client. Today, we are moving to a one-to-many model where a legal service can be automated and accessed by multiple people through a single app. We should strive to recreate the ease of that personal relationship between the lawyer and their client but having a modern digital interpretation of what that entails.

Like any relationship, a customer needs to trust the application that they are using, and by identifying your target audience you can build that into your design from the beginning.

Many businesses are jumping on the 'tech bandwagon' currently and initiating implementations that they then fail to get the full value from because either the transition hasn't been planned effectively, employees haven't been trained and properly introduced to the technology, or most importantly, they haven't defined the problems the technology is solving at an early stage.

Our Advice

- **Familiarity is key:** From working with hundreds of law firms and legal departments over the years people are scared of change. It's therefore important to introduce solutions that integrate with the tools they are already using every day. In order to get this to work, it's important to ask for their input and feedback early on in the implementation cycle.
- **Start small:** Don't worry about providing something with all the bells and whistles, polished, launched and clean. If you are very clear on the points described earlier then you can still build a working, clear and consistent process or service – just a smaller version and then add to it later.
- **Utilize other design principals:** Look at other sectors, products and even architecture for inspiration when generating ideas. It might be the answer is already there and easy to replicate.
- **It never ends:** Ensure you are committed to improving and refining your service or process all the time & in the case of implementing new technology, don't forget about maintenance.

By implementing some legal design thinking principles and following these steps you will gain a greater understanding of the overall process it takes to achieve your goals and in turn, you will create a better experience for your clients and colleagues.

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