

ServDes2018 - Service Design Proof of Concept  
Politecnico di Milano  
18th-19th-20th, June 2018

# Gamification for service design and Innovation: ideaChef® method and tool

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## Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the deployment of ideaChef® gamified method and tool from the perspective of service design experts. It does so by conducting a case study of ideaChef® deployment in a simulation of a new service design concept, where two groups of practitioners and academics were involved in the transformation of a preliminary idea (user on-boarding in an innovation process) into a more structured concept. The paper contributes to service design theory by delivering a new approach to ideation that challenges some of the current approaches to innovation such as collective ideation and criticism avoidance. It also brings significant implications for the service design practice by illustrating a more structured and engaging approach to involve all team members in the collective development of an idea/concept. Furthermore, it provides new insights into what combination of methods and tools should be applied to service design ideation. The integration of ideaChef® approach into the methods and tools typically used by service designers has the potential to provide opportunities for increasing user engagement and the overall quality of the ideation process, particularly at the idea/concept development stage.

**KEYWORDS:** gamification, concept design, innovation, service development

## 1- Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The innovation process is progressively driven by methods and tools associated with “design thinking” because of the applicability of this approach to the development of new solutions for concrete business problems as well as to foster innovation in teams (Chasanidou, Gasparini, & Lee, 2015; Seidel & Fixson, 2013). Design thinking approach to innovation consists of a system of overlapping stages, rather than an orderly sequence of steps, which usually includes: 1- Discovery/Inspiration, which relates to the opportunity or problem that

motivates the need and search for solutions along with data collecting from multiple sources about user needs normally gained through observation, empathy and immersion in their context; 2- Ideation, which relates to idea generation and prototyping and encompasses the process of brainstorming and generating, developing, testing and rapid prototyping ideas created from research insights that may lead to possible solutions and actions plans; 3- Implementation, which relates to the phase where actions plans are finalized in a path that leads to the market (Benson & Dresdow, 2015; Brown, 2008; Chasanidou et al., 2015; Lee & Benza, 2015; Liedtka, 2015; Scherer, Kloeckner, Ribeiro, Pezzotta, & Pirola, 2016). Design thinking is one of the methods and tools used to design services, either to improve an existing service or create a new service.

Gamification can be defined a process of making activities more game-like in non-gaming contexts or non-leisure situations to encourage users' motivation, enjoyment and engagement, particularly in difficult and complex tasks (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011; Werbach, 2014). No matter the resistance to change among many innovation actors, including managers, practitioners and academics, the fact that innovation productivity appears to be declining, and workplace disengagement rising, might suggest a need to a more gameful approach to innovation. Actually, play holds the potential to increase efficiency and productivity at the workspace, unlocking human capacities, like the ability to take risks, improvise, imagine and inspire others (Reeves, Fuller, & Gutierrez-Lopez, 2018).

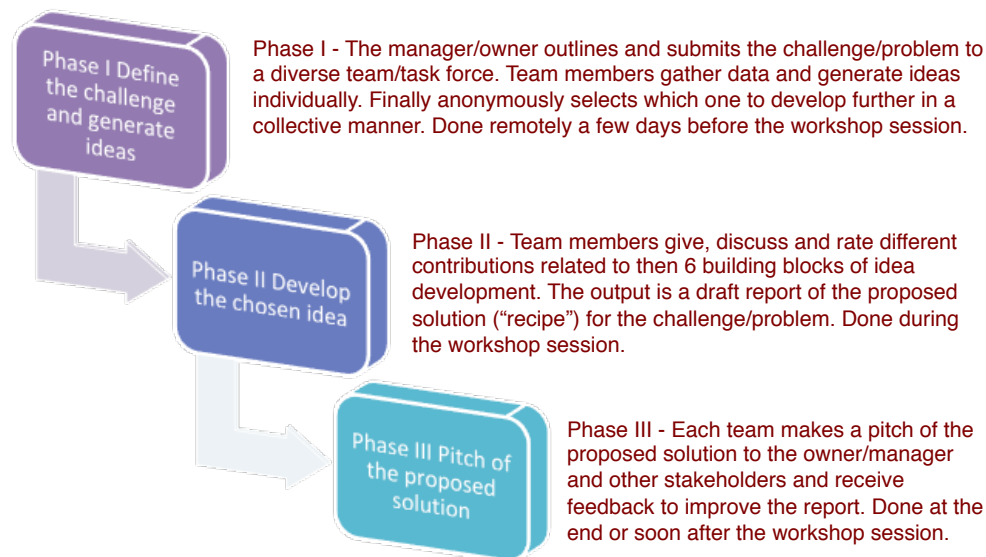
Gamification for service design and innovation is, therefore, an emerging approach that supports service design, by improving user engagement and enhancing the co-creation of new services with a diverse group of stakeholders. Games can be employed in service design to expand the space of possibilities in their current services and made use of these soon after the game sessions (van Amstel & Garde, 2016). This type of approach provides a safe-to-fail environment, a structure and timely process and the creation of solutions with inputs from the users, ensuring a clear outcome at the end for further discussion and improvement. Stakeholders are therefore able to interact, share their experiences and develop an understanding of other key players' problems and priorities (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010). Gamification supports service innovation, particularly in user engagement and co-design of tailored product-service systems (Patricio, Moreira, & Zurlo, 2017).

## 1.2 ideaChef® gamified method and tool

The main goal of ideaChef® is to enable a diverse team to develop and convert a high potential idea into an actionable recipe i.e. a minimum viable concept or light prototype. Its foundation was based on the “one size doesn’t fit all” principle and so designed not to cover the entire but a particular stage of the innovation process. ideaChef® gamified method and tool is thus focused on the idea development phase of ideation, i.e. when there is already an idea that holds the potential to be implemented.

ideaChef® serves to create “recipes” that address a particular challenge, need or problem of a real case scenario, related to either internal processes or to the marketplace, e.g. create a new service; tackle a service weakness; co-create services with customers or prioritize features in upcoming service releases, among others. It supports convergent thinking by helping to narrow a number of potential solutions down to a “best fit” solution, which provides an engaging and more efficient way of selecting and developing ideas to be prototyped or implemented (Patricio, 2017).

ideaChef® follows a method (figure 1) designed for a team of 4 up to 6 players that can be integrated with other tools from the creativity and innovation space, i.e. user research and idea generation. Depending on the nature of the challenge/problem, ideaChef® can be played multiple times by the same team playing different ideas, or by multiple teams playing the same idea.



**Figure 1 - ideaChef® ® method**

ideaChef® method can be adapted to different settings. It was primarily designed for a corporate environment in real case scenarios where time restrictions are one of the key issues for the managers. In this type of environment, having employees face to face is expensive and difficult to manage, i.e. travelling and agendas, so this approach intended to reduce physical meetings and maximize the results of ideation workshop sessions. At the university environment is quite different since is possible to address either case studies and simulations or real case scenarios from companies, breaking down the three phases into several sessions and scheduling another type of remote and class assignments, e.g. idea generation techniques. Besides that, professors and instructors provide adequate time between assignments to give students feedback and allow user research/data gathering.

## 2- Case study

### 2.1 Goal

This study aims to validate the deployment of ideaChef® gamified method and tool from the perspective of service design experts. In order to achieve this particular goal, a case study was conducted within the ServDes.2018 conference in Milano using different research instruments like interviews, surveys and a workshop session with participants from two expert groups: practitioners and academics. Besides addressing the research goal, the workshop session provided ServDes.2018 participants a rich experience in testing a new approach for idea/concept development.

Until so far ideaChef® method and tool have been used extensively by non-designers in corporate settings and at university with students. ServDes.2018 was the opportunity to conceptualize and validate ideaChef® for service design through the lens of high-profile practitioners and academics that are already using several other approaches to ideation. No matter potential risks of too biased evaluation and feedback, this perspective from a qualified service design audience was needed to push the boundaries of ideaChef® testing participants from a different background rather than the traditional targeted user, in order to identify opportunities for improvement.

## 2.2 Sample

Study sample comes from ServDes.2018 conference attendees who signed up for the “gamification for design and innovation” workshop (figure 2). It was a group of 26 practitioners and academics from 13 countries, all having a service design background and expertise in ideation methods and tools. Initially the workshop space was limited to 18 participants and registrations were accepted on a first-come first-serve basis.

Due to a growing demand for registrations, it was decided to accept a maximum of 24 participants. Yet on the day of the workshop, 1 participant did not show up and 3 non-registered participants show up and asked to attend.

Country	Affiliation	Position
India	Company	Practitioner
India	Company	Practitioner
Canada	Company	Practitioner
Colombia	Company	Practitioner
Canada	Public Agency	Practitioner
Poland	Public Agency	Practitioner
Italy	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Canada	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Taiwan	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
US	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Italy	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Spain	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Germany	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Germany	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Finland	Studio/Consultancy	Practitioner
Brazil	University	PhD student
Brazil	University	PhD student
Turkey	University	PhD student
Taiwan	University	Master student
Taiwan	University	Master student
Taiwan	University	Master student
Brazil	University	Professor
Guatemala	University	Professor
US	University	Professor
US	University	Professor
Colombia	University	Professor

Figure 2 – Workshop participants

The facilitators, assuming an additional risk of extending the number of participants and team members beyond a reasonable limit and consequently having less time to share and discuss ideas among them, accepted the request. It was considered that having more people would serve better the goal of gathering more feedback and enrich the study even if getting some disadvantages.

Although not being possible to choose the sample, workshop attendees provided a representative subset of the ServDes.2018 audience with an interesting set of people i.e. service design professors and students as well as practitioners from big companies and design studios consultancies, having a high level of expertise and familiarity with state of the art methods and tools. On the other hand, such diversity introduced more complexity in terms of managing expectations of so many experts from different nationalities.

Despite several limitations (e.g. lack of information about the attendees and exceeding team members limit), case study design followed ideaChef® method (Figure 1), covering three phases, the setup (phase I), the execution (phases II and III) and the evaluation.

## 2.3 Setup phase

Regarding setup, a challenge was submitted one week before the session and workshop participants were asked to generate ideas that could address it. However, due to lack of background information and context about the challenge, participants generated interesting ideas but not so much in line to the challenge. Therefore, it was needed to define an idea/concept more related with the know-how and background of participants. The task was not easy since very little information was available. Thus it was difficult to define and share in advance an idea/concept to develop, which could engage such a diverse group of people in this process. Yet, based on their profile, two ideas/concepts were outlined to develop during the workshop session: #1: coaching approach to support new employee onboarding in a customer experience cross-border project; #2: coaching approach to support new student onboarding in an international service design master course. The concepts were very much the same, i.e. coaching to support onboarding in a service innovation initiative, but

focused on different users, i.e. corporate employees and university students. Regrettably, due to organizational constraints workshop participants did not have the time to gather data and become familiar with the proposed concept before the session.

In contrast to usual ideaChef® projects, it was not possible to go through the process of selecting the team members and rely on their views and data collection to come up with high potential ideas/concepts to address the challenge. Actually, the chosen concept was only shared at the workshop day, which did not let participants collect information and bold insights in advance about the topic to be shared and discussed with the others throughout the session. And since ideaChef® basically serves to develop further an idea/concept that holds the potential to be implemented, this process was limited by the lack of time in terms of team alignment as well as basic understanding of concept and project scope. This has had complicated the kickoff of the game, that is the most delicate part, especially in a context in which people don't know each other, making it more difficult to break the ice and dive into the game. Nevertheless, all team members owned the necessary knowledge to develop the ideas/concepts that were outlined.

## 2.4 Execution phase



During the execution (phases II and II of ideaChef® method), 4 teams composed of members from various countries and different, experiences and cultures addressed the outlined ideas/concepts by following the workshop agenda: 10h00/10h30 – introduction (idea and team alignment); 10h30/11h30 – idea development; 11h30/12h30 – fgidraft report of concept; 12h30/13h00 – concept pitch. Teams #1 and #2 develop the idea/concept #1 (coaching to employee onboarding) and #3 and #4 develop the idea/concept #2

(coaching to student onboarding).

The workshop started nearly half hour later than planned, giving less time for the discussion of the ideas/concepts among the teams. Soon after a very short description of ideaChef® rules, all teams started to develop their own idea/concept on a self-facilitated mode. For each round, a different team member was controlling the time and task, e.g. the evaluation of individual contributions. The two workshop leaders supported the teams in regard to overall time and task management, i.e. discussing the initial idea/concept and reporting the proposed minimal viable concept:







and pitching the improved and further developed idea/concept:



In the end, two alternative reports were made for each of the developed ideas/concepts. Teams that develop further the idea/concept of coaching to employee onboarding ended up with two distinctive but complementary proposals. One was creating a “hitchhiker’s guide to the corporate galaxy” that wanted to overcome cultural and language barriers and reduced anxiety. The other called “coach on the go” aimed at aligning employee goals with project management using a personalized mobile coach approach. Teams that develop further the idea/concept of coaching to student onboarding also proposed different proposals, which matched some of its features. The “Navigating the city: We Mate” concept paired new students with second-year students to face housing, language, cultural and study challenges while having fun and making new friends. The other concept aimed at supporting student’s connections in different stages of the master program, particularly connecting the student with the coach (peer) before classes start. A more detailed explanation of the concepts was provided during the pitch.

## 2.5 Evaluation

Please rate from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) the following items:  
How satisfied were you with the \_\_\_\_?

game design & materials  
use a new approach  
play mode  
balanced contributions of all  
giving and receiving contributions  
reporting concept/solution  
relationships between team members  
game environment/atmosphere  
dialogue between team members  
common understanding and alignment  
knowledge exchange  
contributions from different people  
individual overall learning  
time management  
level of facilitation  
expression of latent thoughts  
expanding of opportunities  
focus on relevant activities  
discussing and developing the idea  
time to convert concept into a report

For the purpose of evaluating the results that have been achieved with this case study, data collection and analysis procedures were conducted. Data collection instruments included workshop observations, survey (figure 3) along with 3 debriefing group interviews at the end of the workshop as well as 16 testimonials and 3 individual short essays delivered immediately after the workshop.

Figure 3 – Survey items

Interview and essays were conducted by asking participants the following questions:

- 1- How was your experience during ideaChef® workshop?
- 2- How ideaChef® can support and enhance service design approach to innovation?
- 3- Besides idea development /concept design, for what other areas ideaChef® can be applied?

Data analysis was performed using a protocol that reflects ideaChef® core themes in terms of relevance and implications of the ideation process. Core themes encompassed game approach; team building; creative thinking; concept outcome; knowledge building and process. Moreover, key issues related to ideaChef® method and tool best fit and potential applications were also considered in the data analysis.

## 3- Discussion of findings

Findings provide several insights about benefits and advantages of ideaChef® as well as areas that can benefit from improvement. It was also possible to confirm key application areas and identify further uses not only in the innovation landscape but also in other organizational settings.

Based on the 20 items of the survey (figure 4), which have been assessed on a scale ranging from “very poor (1)” to “excellent (5)”, the overall level of satisfaction with ideaChef® was 4,2 (out of 5).

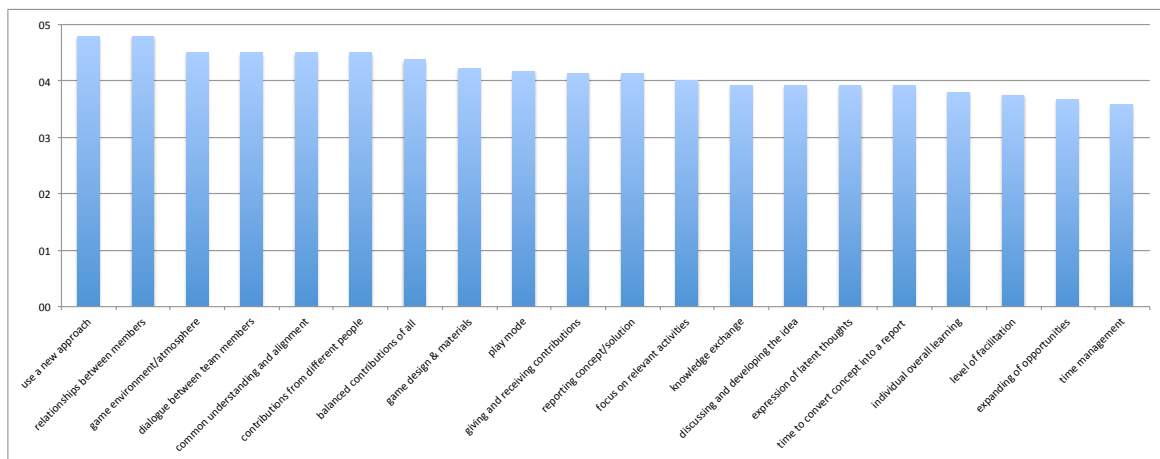


Figure 4 – Survey results

Analyze of findings per core themes combined data from survey results, debriefing group interviews, testimonials and individual short essays.

### 3.1 Game approach

The level of satisfaction with “game elements” (table 1) achieved an overall rate of 4,4 and has been composed by the following survey items: game design & materials (4,2); the fact that we are using a new approach (4,8) and play mode (4,2).

Table 1 - “game approach” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

Fun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I think it was an interesting idea to have a gamified way of coming out with a service concept.</i></li> <li>• <i>The game method was fun and novel. A creative way to innovate.</i></li> <li>• <i>Great game! Fun and thought provoking way to engage partners (people) in service design process.</i></li> <li>• <i>I enjoyed the gamified approach.</i></li> </ul>
Novelty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Thanks for providing such a rich and innovative experience.</i></li> <li>• <i>IdeaChef® reminds me of the business model canvas but is more fun and interactive to create.</i></li> <li>• <i>It remembers me a lot the business model canvas, same concept and structured but gamified.</i></li> </ul>
Rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It would be great to have the instructions at the beginning like a quick overview about the steps by steps about what the whole think look like.</i></li> <li>• <i>We were a little confused about the instructions, and how many rounds to do, if we could discuss and if that was for additional time. If there was a guide for 1, 2 or 3 points, that would have been helpful.</i></li> <li>• <i>I like the game but I think we need additional instructions on how to play.</i></li> <li>• <i>We may need more instructions and information before starting the game.</i></li> <li>• <i>There was some uncertainty in terms of moving ahead without a thorough understanding of the rules of the game.</i></li> </ul>



It has been recognized that ideaChef® provides a fun, innovative and more engaging experience. While not having the same goal and positioning, ideaChef® was sometimes compared with Business Model Canvas, a well know visual method for developing new or documenting existing business models.

As mentioned by some participants, game elements can be improved by providing participants with more comprehensive game instructions. Usually participants find it easy and quick to catch up with basic rules but due to the limitations already mentioned, some mentioned that would have been beneficial to have early on a quick overview about the whole picture. It was observed that such a minimal explanation provided to participants should not in any other situation be repeated. As in the traditional process, at the beginning of the session participants should be provided with a 5 min. briefing of the rules and the possibility to use the existing personal menu card (short explanation of the rules that this time was not provided to participants). In conclusion, much better results can be achieved by providing a quick overview of the concept and rules before starting the game, even with an expert audience.

#### *Team building*

The level of satisfaction with “team building” (table 2) achieved an overall rate of 4,6 and has been composed by the following survey items: relationships between team members (4,8); game environment/atmosphere (4,5); dialogue between team members (4,5) and common understanding and team alignment (4,5).

**Table 2 - “team building” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays**

Spirit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Great for team building activities, it would be more than a good icebreaker practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>I think is nice for team building, for sure breaking down barriers and having people comfortable with taking risks each other in an innovation workshop.</i></li> <li>• <i>I think is appropriate for team building.</i></li> </ul>
Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>For collaboration and having everyone’s opinion of is a great approach.</i></li> <li>• <i>I would use it because I really liked the multiple perceptiveness of it.</i></li> <li>• <i>It could be a good practice for groups consisted of participants from different backgrounds.</i></li> </ul>

ideaChef® fosters a spirit of teamwork and collaboration, team up and ability to join forces. It is a good method to create a successful work environment with people from different backgrounds. There is a wide value perception in regard to this type of outcome, which also contributes to high levels of user engagement.

### **3.2 Creative thinking**

The level of satisfaction with “creative thinking” (table 3) achieved an overall rate of 3,8 and has been composed by the following survey items: expression of your latent thoughts (3,9) and expanding of opportunities (3,7).

Table 3 - “creative thinking” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In some questions we needed to come up with general consensus to unlock the metaphoric approach. But overall I had a charging, pushing, triggering experience.</i></li> <li><i>Sometimes I could not understand the questions because we were having different perspectives of looking at it. So it was good having different perspectives but there was also difficult.</i></li> <li><i>I really liked it, I loved this game for brainstorming interpretations and it was really working out.</i></li> <li><i>I think the questions you have there are triggering very well the different points that you have to think and this great for inspiration at the beginning.</i></li> <li><i>I also missed the part we were creating original and specific value, we were talking about general attributes.</i></li> <li><i>Questions were not designed in order to create some innovative ideas. They are not acting as idea booster, they are not asking me to stretch imagination and come up with something new.</i></li> <li><i>In the begging is hard to think on the questions, depending on the question cards, and then provide an answer. I did not know how rich and specific this answer should be in regarding to the system/solution that we are creating.</i></li> <li><i>I did not know if I could say whatever I wanted or I needed to agree with the others beforehand.</i></li> </ul>

Participants’ evaluation was not at all consensual regarding this theme. Although the very good feedback regarding a challenging and triggering experience provided by the question cards, particularly the ones using metaphors, some participants considered that questions were not really acting as boosters to create innovative ideas. In this situation, participants did not totally perceive that contributions were going to be improved by building upon each other ideas.

Even in situations where the goal is not generating a completely new idea but developing or testing an existing idea, creative thinking dimension remains critical. Yet not having a concrete case to address turns more difficult for participants to feel inspired and triggered by the questions and game dynamics. On top of that, due to the background of participants, i.e. people that are already used to stretch their imagination, their expectation in this respect was probably higher. All these circumstances made both creative and concept outcome dimensions underestimated.

### 3.3 Concept outcome

The level of satisfaction with the “concept outcome” (table 4) achieved an overall rate of 4,0 and has been composed by the following survey items: focus on relevant activities to address the challenge (4,0); time to convert potential concept into a report of a solution (3,9) and process of reporting the concept/solution (4,1).

Table 4 - “concept outcome” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

Idea/Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Since I come out as an outsider I did know anything about the initial concept and so when we start paying the game I felt that we were talking about general concepts and describing things</i></li> </ul>

*in a very general fashion and then passing all the stages and close to end getting a more concrete concept, which actually fits into all these things we were talking about.*

- *It was nice, at the beginning we were in blank since we did not any idea of anything so it was hard but with the time it was useful and good.*
- *At the first it was confusing, which I like. I like not knowing what and trying to figure out as it goes along what it means.*
- *I think we misinterpreted the idea and the concept we were supposed to do with that but as soon as we understood it we went back to the game, so it was the major barrier for us.*
- *We lost time at the beginning trying to figure out if we were developing the idea or creating a new one.*
- *When looking at the question cards we were always thinking about what was the idea.*
- *I missed introduction when we could align our understanding of a general concept that would make a following work.*
- *I think we were focused on answering the questions without have a clear concept of our problem up front, so closing the gap to create an innovative & differentiated report felt like a stretch.*
- *Perhaps it needs a more concrete case study of an industry.*
- *I think if could actually take into practical things it would be really nice.*

It is harder to evaluate the outcome without having a real case where participants are engaged before the gamification workshop and motivated to proceed with idea/concept development. In this case study, some of the participants never had any contact or information about ideacheef® or the challenge subject and most of them had different expectations of the workshop.

In fact, going for an idea generation workshop, using an ideas-first approach does not require too much background information about the subject. However, using ideacheef® to achieve a minimum viable concept of an existing idea/concept, using a needs-first approach requires that participants researched the subject and can add value to the discussion. Some of the quotes reflected the difficulties of clarifying the concrete goal of the workshop (creating a new idea or developing an existing one) and connecting some general ideas with a minimum viable concept. Nevertheless, it was possible in all the 4 cases to bridge this gap by connecting all the contributions and structuring a draft report of the concept proposal.

### 3.4 Knowledge building

The level of satisfaction with “knowledge building” (table 5) achieved an overall rate of 4,2 and has been composed by the following survey items: balanced contributions of all team members (4,4); giving and receiving contributions (4,1); knowledge exchange between participants (3,9) and contributions from different people (4,5).

**Table 5 - “knowledge building” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays**

#### Contributions

- *Forcing everybody to say something to produce an idea and then have this short session of feedback it worked very well and that is something that I am missing in my practice. In a lot of workshops there are a lot of people who don't talk and they have good insights but are shy.*
- *This forces everyone listen to everyone, this is a good tool for that.*
- *Everyone felt appreciated by giving out his or her opinions.*

Ideachef® facilitates knowledge building by encouraging the interaction and balanced contributions of all participants. This unique characteristic reinforces the team building and supports the process of idea development.

### 3.5 Process

The level of satisfaction with “process” (table 6) achieved an overall rate of 3,8 and has been composed by the following survey items: process of discussing and developing the idea (3,9); time management (3,6); level of facilitation (3,8) and individual overall learning (3,8).

Table 6 - “process” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

Configuration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I really like ideaChef®. The process of giving and receiving contributions from the team members was really good!</i></li> <li>• <i>Nice game / process.</i></li> <li>• <i>I like this scoring in terms of prioritizing things.</i></li> <li>• <i>The game is hard but that is good. Forces you to make decisions, take risks to make mistakes and not worry about ideas being fully fluttered out. Thereby reducing risk/fear of failure, etc. Is good for encouraging continuous improvement in an interactive way, building upon each other's ideas.</i></li> <li>• <i>Participants in our group as they were not comfortable presenting an idea/concept that was not fully fleshed out - perhaps they were risk averse or uncomfortable presenting. I think more risk averse.</i></li> <li>• <i>Good process, maybe questions need to be more specific.</i></li> <li>• <i>Sometimes questions were too long and complex (metaphors).</i></li> <li>• <i>Not all cards seemed very useful.</i></li> <li>• <i>Process of contributing was confusing.</i></li> <li>• <i>Language barriers in the team also slowed down the process.</i></li> <li>• <i>We also had a few language barriers - which I found quite interested since I was able to learn different perspectives from the way people understood or interpreted words, phrases and concepts.</i></li> </ul>
Time limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I think it will be nice to have more minutes of discussing and reflection because we have people coming from different countries so people would have that time to understand each other so it would be helpful and interesting to reflect and discuss. On the other hand I think is real great that is forcing to make decisions very quickly without thinking too much, so no analysis per analysis. Sometimes I was extremely stressed because of the time but on other times I was thinking this is fun so the tension of balance is quite exciting.</i></li> <li>• <i>I felt the time pressure on the team very much and I suggest going for 2 min presentation and exchange. I felt the team was starting to ideate and you some how don't want to break it but timing it, so this is something very difficult to deal with.</i></li> <li>• <i>It was really cool for me. I love when we do some quick brainstorming and we come up with some ideas of a concept but there was no time for us to collect ideas for the entire concept.</i></li> <li>• <i>It would be nice to add one more minute to for discussion/reflection.</i></li> <li>• <i>Taught to idea and keep time in simultaneous. Not enough time for team alignment on at the end. Not enough time to present and feedback 1 min (suggest 2 min).</i></li> <li>• <i>Time limitation – difficult to contribute sometimes or created lack of understanding.</i></li> <li>• <i>At the beginning I had some difficulties in putting "our user" in the position named in the cards in very limited time frames.</i></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We may need to have more time discuss the idea.</i></li> <li>• <i>We probably needed to go through most of the questions to get a clearer picture.</i></li> <li>• <i>I spent more time to understand the questions that I thought.</i></li> </ul>
<p>Facilitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Having a facilitator at the table is very helpful and should probably be a requirement.</i></li> <li>• <i>There was not enough facilitation.</i></li> <li>• <i>A more professional facilitator is needed (that knows the game and the process) to give out a more rich result.</i></li> <li>• <i>Once the game is played/completed - there should be space for reflection with the facilitator wherein the facilitator can outline "why" the game is laid out a certain way so people can truly take away the benefits which encourage transformation...i.e. - quick decisions - making people try instead of worrying to much about the outcome, which can always be improved.</i></li> </ul>

Similarly to creative thinking, participants' evaluation regarding the process configuration and time management was not at all consensual. As mentioned by one of the participants, keeping the balance between reflection and quick decisions is exciting but also very hard.

Actually, ideachef® was not designed to provide a full, clear and complete report of a minimum viable concept, which is almost impossible to achieve in just 3 or 4 hours. The goal was essentially to provide a snapshot of the proposed concept, making it visible to everyone. Moreover, it was designed to encourage everyone to participate in the discussion and overcome some group dynamics biases that typically come out from the traditional approach. It was also expected to generate a broader participation, not just from the ones that played the game and proposed the concept but also from all the others that in a subsequent stage would make further contributions to improve or allocate resources to prototype the proposed concept.

In fact, some participants commented that *the concept was a flushed out*, which means bring to light a concept that already existed and develop it further with inputs from all team members. ideachef® approach challenges several assumptions and practices that are adopted as a mainstream form of ideation. So is quite natural that shifting away from the traditional style is much harder for some people. On top of that, the use of metaphors and time restrictions makes the process more difficult but at the same time more rewarding. Particularly at the end when is possible to figure out how different contributions were connected and allowed to end up with a concrete outcome. Besides all the considerations about the essence of the approach and the need to make quick decisions, the lack of time can be minimized by a more comprehensive introduction about the original concept and goal of the game upfront.

Participants also discussed facilitation as an issue that should be improved. Two different perspectives can be examined, one regarding the game facilitation, e.g. time management and scoring and the other more related to reporting phase where teams can be ignited with new inputs. Having a group of service design experts, who are intrinsically professional facilitators, undertaking this evaluating makes their views more biased in relation to the need and importance of this support. Still is very interesting the possibility to redesign the game to take more time to facilitation at the reporting phase.

### 3.6 ideaChef® best fit

Feedback from participants supported ideaChef® concept design and application process. It was recognized that this innovative approach is appropriate to further develop or improve an existing idea/concept, and not so much to create a new one (table 7). Actually, ideaChef®

was designed to enable the conceptualization of an idea based on the 6 building blocks, i.e. user, value, resources, attributes, change and configuration of product/service/process.

Table 7 - “best fit” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

<p>Idea/Concept development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It seems it could be for me a more useful approach to evaluate an idea that I already have and using the questions to check it.</i></li> <li><i>If you have already the core of something that is a bit innovative, if you have the begging of something this game is probably a good process to refine it and to look at it from different angles and structures but I don't think it is something to create something completely new.</i></li> <li><i>Final evaluation of an idea, restructuring and refining it and making sure that all elements are there for generating the report.</i></li> <li><i>From my perspective it depends where in the process you use this, so if it is for quick ideation and selection is great, but still think that a lot of research is required, talking with the users and understanding the behaviors because we are making a lot of assumptions in the game. But if we had already know all this stuff that we need to cover for research and have done this sort of iterative process it would be much better.</i></li> <li><i>Title of the game: meeting an existing idea rather than creating a new one</i></li> <li><i>I assumed this ideaChef® was meant for ideation but I agree that only after user research is done this may come.</i></li> <li><i>So it needs to have research and other tools to check and balance and other explanations. So this is a great tool in a specific moment of time.</i></li> <li><i>I think it's good for quick idea generation/concept - but there must be validation of that concept generated.</i></li> <li><i>An interesting approach for constructive idea development &amp; discussion</i></li> </ul> <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>It is like a template for representing your idea, going thought the users, resources, attributes, so all the concept will bring about the thing, so the report are representing the idea.</i></li> <li><i>As a communication tool it was really cool.</i></li> <li><i>It depends on what intents of the game for. Lets say that someone has an idea and wants to have an initial validation session with people who were not familiar with the idea I think this a good communication tool for that. If people from the team have different concepts of the idea it could be used for communication tool as well, to make sure they are all in the same page.</i></li> <li><i>Unfortunately it is very easy to miscommunicate. People think are talking about the same thing but are not. And this tool makes you reevaluate those things from different perspectives.</i></li> </ul> <p>Ideation kickoff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What I really like also is that is like a kicking off and understanding phase. So I would use it as a kick off tool. I think the questions you have there are triggering very well the different points that you have to think and this great for inspiration at the beginning. And then latter on will definitively go for proper research.</i></li> <li><i>ideaChef® is well suited for quick ideation and selection as it forces you to make decisions quickly rather than suffer analysis paralysis. That being said, depending on where in the process this game is played, it might not benefit from the use of deep user research and identification of stakeholder/actors etc, and the outcome may be based on too many assumptions.</i></li> </ul>
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Therefore, ideaChef® should be applied during the developing and testing phase of ideation stage, subsequently to the user research and brainstorming/idea generation stages. But it can



also be useful, using a less linear approach, for supporting ideation kick-off, idea/concept selection or even for communicating an existing idea.

### 3.7 ideaChef® service design other application areas

Besides the innovation process, ideaChef® has the potential to support service design (table 8) as well as other business and organizational processes, like team building, marketing & project management (table 9).

Table 8 - “service design” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>This is definitively going to be one of the approaches that we want to follow but we are not really sure if this is the only one that will follow, maybe some ideation of project at as well.</i></li> <li>• <i>For the same questions different answers from each group can come up so it changes the result of the service concept, the outcome.</i></li> <li>• <i>I think this would be helpful for assessing an existing service to spark conversations about what needs to change.</i></li> <li>• <i>Like the idea of gamification to create the service concept! Interesting experience</i></li> <li>• <i>Fun and thought provoking way to engage partners (people) in service design process</i></li> </ul>
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Table 9 - “other application areas” representative quotes from interviews, testimonials and essays

<p>Team Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I think is nice for team building, for sure breaking down barriers and having people comfortable with taking risks each other in a workshop.</i></li> <li>• <i>It could be a good practice for groups consisted of participants from different backgrounds. In social public sector or even in private companies, for team building activities, it would be more than a good icebreaker practice.</i></li> <li>• <i>I think it's good for team building.</i></li> </ul> <p>Marketing &amp; Project Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Marketing and branding are good applications.</i></li> <li>• <i>I think you can apply the questions and topics in many other fields like the users and value, so it makes sense for events and project management or communication brand.</i></li> </ul>
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## 3- Conclusions

According to spontaneous feedback and evaluation of data gathered from different sources, participants really enjoyed the rich experience of testing this new approach for idea/concept development. Along with all testimonials and written feedback, the overall score obtained in the survey clearly demonstrates the value and potential of ideaChef® gamified method and tool from the perspective of high-profile service design practitioners and academics.

Even if this study did not target the traditional audience of corporate employees involved in idea/concept development and students, inputs from service design experts contributed significantly to rethink the application domains and the market communication approach. As mentioned by one of the participants, *I think ideaChef® will work better with non-designers on the table because we are always looking for something beyond the innovation.*

Actually, study participants provided interesting suggestions for improvement and further developments, which will definitively allow to push the boundaries of ideaChef®. Two thought-provoking suggestions will be considered in the short-term. One is the use of radical analysis to broader and opens up new user perspectives, which will support the creative thinking side of ideaChef®. The other is adding a new set of question cards using “mad libs”, a method where is possible to fill in the blanks and make the questions more relevant and specific. Another interesting opportunity is to explore new ways to incorporate other types of incentives for participants to contribute.

Simply because of the novelty of this approach or due to a poor set of expectations for workshop participants, some feedback revealed a miss-match between the idea/concept and question cards. In fact, some of the participants were expecting to use an idea generation tool, as in many brainstorming ideas-first approach sessions (Ulwick, 2018), and not something specific to the development of an existing idea. Inspired on a needs-first approach, ideaChef® advocates workshops and other participatory sessions for the development of an existing idea/concept. Besides that, ideaChef® is focused on an existing idea/concept that was generated and selected, individually or collectively, in a prior moment of time by the same or different team(s) when addressing a concrete organizational or business challenge or problem.

As already discussed, evaluation of some of the items was not always consensual. ideaChef® challenges a lot of assumptions and practices, such as facilitation, face to face collective brainstorm, discussion time limit and ways of agreeing/disagreeing. In this sense, ideaChef® is a game changer and like in many innovative approaches is typical to find early adopters as well as others that will only adopt the idea when is widely accepted by the community of practice.

To maximize the outcomes achieved by the use of ideaChef® is fundamental to properly conduct the set up phase with research and data gathering about the chosen idea/concept. Otherwise, it will not be easy to ensure the right match between the question cards and the development of the existing idea, turning much more difficult to structure the idea, close the dots and propose a sound and comprehensive minimal viable concept. Therefore, it makes sense to allocate enough time at the begging of the session for idea/concept alignment and “on-boarding” or “warm-up” activities with team members, particularly when having people from different countries and cultures.

Finally, this case study revealed that even with several limitations, i.e. a diverse group of people from various countries and cultures without any past relationships and insufficient background information about the goal of the game and idea/concept, it was possible to transform a brief sentence of an idea/concept into a sketch of a minimal viable concept proposal, in less than 3 hours. This fact is relevant for both practitioners and academics since this concrete output element is not common in most of the tools in the innovation and creativity space. ideaChef® ensures a good balance between the process, i.e. learning from using the method and tool and the outcome, i.e. minimum viable concept proposal.

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