

31VOLTS

CASE #03

KLM



PRIDE IS BLUE

1600. That is the number of colleagues at KLM Passenger Services – a division of the royal Dutch airline. The challenge presented to us was to cultivate a spirit of responsibility and freedom among all staff to put the customer first. No easy feat in this task-oriented, logistical and time critical environment where more and more processes are being automated.

KLM Passenger Services (KLM PS) employs all ground staff of the Dutch airline. They man check-in and information desks, assist at the airport, take care of passengers with special needs, are responsible for timely boarding of the aircrafts, et cetera. KLM PS is divided in 10 divisions with over 71 different types of jobs.

Everything within KLM PS is aimed at the most efficient 'turnaround' – the amount of time it takes to get an airplane back into the air after landing. The goal is to achieve as many safe turnarounds as is humanly possible.

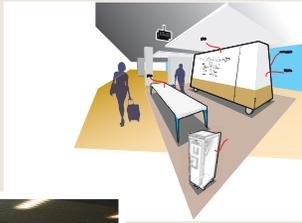
Over the past decades KLM has invested in self-services for passengers: online check-in, check-in machines at the airport, baggage drop systems, and so on. It is of course part

of the development in most sectors to put the customer more and more in control of his or her own journey.

Self-services are a natural part of the new world. Nevertheless they heavily impact the organization. Automating customer processes demands a different way of working, a shift in focus. As any airline is by nature extremely task oriented, the work used to evolve around checking in 300 suitcases as fast as possible. Over time the work has become about hospitality, and caring for customers and taking care of their needs. About conveying that typical 'KLM-pride', about making sure passengers feel seen and heard, so that they will choose KLM as their preferred airline again and again.



▲ A pilot writes down what inspires him



Service Design Studio
Pop-up at Schiphol



Polaroid Wall Project
Connection with the passenger



KLM Toolbox
Empowering design teams

Out of the suggestion box



Tribute to the passenger
Exposition at Schiphol



Wall of Inspiration
Pre-flight entertainment



Surprise Me
Colleagues on a mission

▲ A selection of ideas that put the customer first

KLM PS approached us in 2012 with the question to help them investigate new ways to boost customer-centricity among staff. After a couple of preliminary discussions we took a step back to figure out the real need behind that question. That led us to tweak the challenge to: the need to facilitate and stimulate a culture in which employees feel challenged and free to put the customer first. How do you accomplish that for 1,600 employees within the dynamics of the continued development of automated self-services and the demanding efficiency targets?

KLM PS agreed with our analysis of the challenge at hand. It became the foundation of our collaboration and the start of a series of projects and initiatives. All aimed at putting KLM staff in control of the content and execution of their new roles; they got to design that role. We facilitated the direction, the tools, knowhow and the process.

The suggestion box that actually got things done

The very first thing we did was open up a suggestion box. Not the kind that swallows ideas never to be heard from again. This one was different. Anyone with a suggestion was made responsible for the execution and success of their idea. Teams were formed with colleagues and with our support ideas were transformed into business cases and actual projects. We introduced design thinking methods like experimenting, prototyping and testing. The box sprouted a massive flow of ideas and initiatives. Below we discuss just a few of them.

Wall of Inspiration

A whiteboard was mounted on wheels and used as Pre Flight Entertainment at the gates. The idea was based on the thought that passengers waiting at the gate have a similar experience as in waiting rooms at the dentist's or doctor's office: it is boring and we all tend to retreat into our own little bubble. What if we could add some fun and interaction? This very simple idea made it easy for people to engage. At a gate, everyone shares the same destination. The whiteboard encouraged people to share their stories. What are your plans in New York City? Why are you traveling to Singapore? What is your favorite restaurant at the flight's destination, the best shopping area, nicest spa, coolest place to hang out?

The Wall of Inspiration exceeded all expectations. People drew, wrote and shared on it. It turned out to be a perfect conversation starter, pics of the wall were shared on social media. Waiting at the gate turned into a moment of connection.

Surprise me

Another idea was to create a game of 'missions' for colleagues. Specifically no 'tasks', but fun challenges to surprise a passenger or a co-worker. The game was a bit of a secret, only a handful of staff knew about the idea. Missions were printed on game cards that were left in the pigeonholes of selected colleagues.

The missions? Well, they could be anything. For example: think of a co-worker that could use some support and give them an hour of your time – to listen, to go for a walk, to help out. Another one was to ask a passenger to send a post card from their destination to one of your colleagues. Or it could be to do something 'extra' for a passenger, something outside protocol, the extra mile. Et cetera.

“When you make personal contact, passengers really do remember. This makes me happy.”

Marian – Ticket Agent

After accomplishing a mission the results could be reported to the Rewards Hotline, after which an invitation was extended to join a festive gathering. Each month we hosted a party with a small awards ceremony to celebrate the successes. Impressive meetings where senior management and ground agents often met for the first time. Ideal moments to share experiences and concerns. Ideas to improve KLM's care for personnel and passengers were born there.



▲ We made a book full of blue stories

Tribute to the passenger

An exhibition with portraits of passengers photographed by KLM staff was on display for a couple of months at a central location on Schiphol Airport (KLM's home base). The portraits gave a face to the 40 million travellers who visit Schiphol each year. Each face was accompanied by a short personal story. The exhibition was a tribute to 'the passenger' and offered KLM staff a visual source of inspiration: these are the people they aim to serve each day.

92 stories; a tip of the iceberg

Ask anyone working at KLM PS and you will get an abundance of beautiful, touching, funny and interesting stories about things that happen during work hours. The magical world of an airport is a source of so much human interaction and emotion. Often the stories are about passengers in special circumstances. Every day offers so many encounters and adventures, you could fill a book with them. That is exactly what we did. "No day is the same" was the title.

A team of PS staff were selected as interviewers and photographers and took part in the editorial meetings. The result was a book with 92 moving stories and beautiful portraits. All of them brimming with pride. All 1,600 colleagues were invited to pick up a copy of the book, within 48 hours they had all done so. It enabled others to share their stories as well, something that continues to be part of KLM culture and communications. Pride became a bit more blue with this book.



▲ We celebrated the success of 'Surprise me'

Then what?

All these and many more initiatives were developed and executed within a 2-year period. The design and people driven approach led to a shift in focus and culture within KLM PS. More blue pride and more cohesion between divisions. A better understanding of customer centricity and a shared feeling of responsibility to come up with ideas and implement new ways to improve any passenger's experience with KLM. By the end of that 2-year term it was time to give even more ownership to

KLM PS staff. To secure our way of working within the organization we built a Service Design Studio at Schiphol Airport. For two months this studio was open 7 days a week, 12 hours per day. It was managed by a few people of our team, but mainly by PS staff that were encouraged to start creating.

They came up with ideas, we offered advice, tools and coaching. This way we trained them in design thinking and to nourish a more creative and open way of approaching problems and their work.

We design for aspiring organizations that strive to be meaningful for people.

Design in the service of people. That's the shortest version to explain what we do. Designing is something you do for others, for users, customers and co-workers. That is why we always put people first; they shape our work.

"But what do you guys actually design?" is a question we get a lot. The answer is not always clear-cut, especially when we are just starting a new project. What we can tell you is that the answer is not a product, a poster, an app or an interior. Nevertheless, things like that might very well be part of the solution.

So what do we do? We design the relationship between organizations and people. Those people can be customers, students, colleagues, patients, suppliers or users. That is why no project is the same in our line of work.

What's the real question here?

We always start out with a thorough look at the problem at hand. That's how service design differs from other design approaches. What is the challenge we are dealing with? What is the perspective of the end user? Who is that user? And what's the real question we need to answer?

Approaching our work like that lands us in the most interesting places. We wandered the streets of Cairo, visited schools in southern Netherlands, researched the F-Terminal on Schiphol and had a meeting in the machine room of an elevator in Amsterdam. We followed potential museum visitors in the city of Utrecht, interviewed civil servants at a

Dutch ministry and talked to people seeking help with 'Slachtofferhulp Nederland' (Victim Support Netherlands). To just name a few of the things we do.

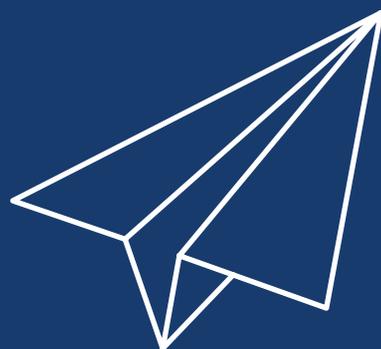
We research the way people interact with our client's organization and brand and we uncover what their desires and needs are. Only then can we find the opportunities for meaningful innovation. Those opportunities may lead to new or improved services, products, processes or business plans.

Design is a verb

Design is the way we work, the way we approach any project, the way we find answers. Design is a verb, that much we know. We involve people in each step of our design process; from research to co-creation and from prototyping to implementation. Designing the future is a joint effort, powered by people.

The thing is, it's easy to design something or to come up with 'a solution'. "Solutions are not the problem," is what we keep telling each other. We will never start thinking about or working on solving a problem until we have a very clear understanding of the actual question. And about the experience of the end user. Knowing the real challenge, leads us in the direction of solutions that add value. How can we create that value for the end user and for our client? And even more important; how do we make that come true?

Only if and when we can see and measure the impact and success of our solutions, will we finish up a project.



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