IDEO

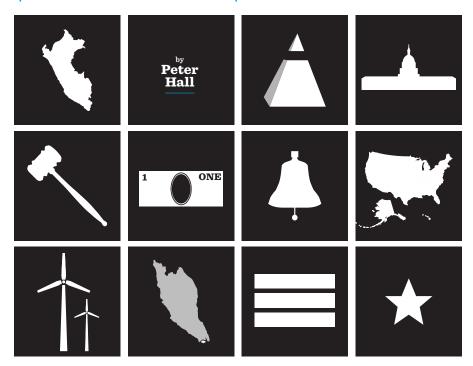## TAKES ON THE GOVERNMENT

The nimble consultancy brings design thinking to political structures in desperate need of reinvention.

by
Peter Hall

METROPOLIS

The entire philosophy and method of IDEO, the product-design and innovation firm, is encapsulated in its bathrooms. First, the human-centered interface: in the San Francisco office, there are three bathrooms, but to save time or the awkwardness of lingering outside, each has a lamp above the door resembling a taillight. If it's glowing green, the bathroom's unoccupied. Second, collaborative brainstorming: painted across one bathroom's white walls is a strip of black chalkboard paint for comments, ideas, projects. At the time of my visit, it had been set up as a vote counter for staff to pick and nominate ideas for summer classes, presumably organized during lunch hours. Topics included "cooking at work" (16 votes), "finance" (8 votes), and "lovemaking" (7 votes). Third, its "fail early" mantra, usually applied to prototyping: above the toilet was a circuslike poster depicting a blindfolded, mustachioed man standing back as a zebra leaped out of a top hat. Advertising the all-IDEO "world talent show," at which staff demonstrate to each other their yodeling, break-dancing, or nose-whistling abilities, the poster bears the title, in huge block letters, "Permission to Fail."

One wonders, then, what the stream of civil servants who have arrived at IDEO's offices over the last two years must make of its approach to problem solving, as culturally removed from Washington, D.C., as lovemaking is from Microsoft PowerPoint. Is IDEO seen as an eccentric relative? An exotic vacation? Or something with potentially more impact? Four different government entities have awarded contracts to IDEO in the past two years: the Social Security Administration has asked the firm to help figure out how to get more people applying for retirement benefits online. The General Services Administration (GSA) has asked it to look into ways to use smart-building dashboards to drive people to use less energy. The new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, set up by an act of Congress in response to the financial crisis, is talking to IDEO about shaping its services to meet public needs. And the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has asked the firm to do short-term research into attracting and recruiting top people to government positions and, subsequently, retaining them. For executives from these offices, the writing on the bathroom walls must sound giddily liberating, even irresponsible.

Although IDEO has worked in the public sector before, this new wave of contracts is apparently tied to the current administration's efforts to make government more innovative and less bureaucratic. Shortly after President Obama took office in 2009, he hired John Berry as director of the OPM, with a mission to make working for the government cool again, bringing young, tech-savvy people into the aging federal workforce. In August of that year, Berry picked three private companies to visit in California: Google, Facebook, and IDEO. "He was looking for good ideas, such as how do successful firms design successful spaces to get the most of their people," says Matthew Collier, senior adviser to the director. IDEO was subsequently contracted to look at the recruitment problem and organized a one-day workshop, culminating in some short video and some recommendations. "The value of that engagement went far beyond the deliverables," Collier says of the project's impact at his organization. "The real value has been a shift in thinking." Compared with a traditional polling firm, he adds, IDEO's research method was "unscientific" but "a really good way to extract deep insights."

The idea that IDEO's method is considered unscientific indicates something about its sudden and perhaps unexpected popularity in Washington. Amid pressure to reduce the cost and size of government, senior officials are looking to the private sector for guidance on how to do more with less. At the same time, the current administration's bid to increase oversight of federal contractors suggests it is looking for alternatives to the methods of the ubiquitous Beltway Bandits—the contractors around Washington that secure a lion's share of government work. IDEO's "human-centered approach to innovation" embraces a less established method of problem solving than that of the techno-scientific cultures of the Beltway. Compared with the scientific method, design thinking is a disorderly process: designers make educated guesses, ask outside-the-box questions, and form hypotheses based on the understanding that new evidence will require (even invite) a rethink.

An example is the work IDEO recently completed for the Social Security Administration. Asked to figure out how to get signficantly more retirees filing online by 2015,

IDEO sent its researchers and designers out to watch how people used the Social Security offices, Web site, and forms. Rather than present proposals, IDEO organized a series of giant strategy workshops with Social Security managers, ditching the standard boardroom table and PowerPoint presentations for smaller, round tables, Post-it notes, and posters. On the walls were concepts intended as a kind of litmus test for the tone of the new-look online agency, from cozy (nicknamed "library") to functional ("subway") to official ("statement"). With remarkable speed, the civil servants stopped sending proxies to the IDEO-led meetings, rolled their sleeves up, and got involved. Fred Dust, the boyish and hyperarticulate partner in charge of IDEO's large-systems projects, describes the difference between initial meetings and the first workshop: "At our first meeting, everyone comes because they want to know, who the hell are these people? We're in a room with the biggest boardroom table I've ever seen, but only the top-ranking people sit at the table and the junior staff sit behind them, and they all sit in their areas. By the time we got to this workshop, everyone was sitting with everyone. The dynamic shifted quite radically. We also had the problem that everyone wanted to come to the meetings."

The collaboration ended a swift six months later with some IDEO prototypes: a brighter, bolder concept Web site with collapsible sections to control the amount of information on screen and one-page filing with bars indicating the user's progress through the site. But more significant than these concepts, which the agency is now considering as part of an in-house redesign, was a buzz in the D.C. air about the IDEO experience. "We've been hearing from lots of other agencies who've heard about this engagement," Frank Baitman, Social Security's chief information officer, says. "They're asking us about the experience we had and asking advice about pursuing their own design projects. It's pretty exciting with all the federal agencies interested. It's creating some competition."

IDEO's shift from products to complex problems requires an increasingly multidisciplinary staff. Established out of David Kelley Design in 1991, and closely aligned with Stanford University's design school, IDEO became known for seeking "T-shaped" people: designers and engineers with deep and broad skill sets—specifically, a core of technical abilities along with collaborative, conceptual, or managerial instincts. Lately it has been looking for "X-shaped people," according to Dust: employees with "two depths, one being a craft, like organizational design, architecture, or continued on page 106

"We've been hearing from lots of other agencies who've heard about this engagement," Frank Baitman, Social Security's chief information officer, says. "It's pretty exciting with all the federal agencies interested."

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Learn, Plan & Apply
We've organized all of our programs into 3 steps to help you become familiar with our policies, plan for your unique situation and file online.

Learn
We've provided information, tools and resources for each of our programs that will help you understand the policies around your benefit eligibility and qualification amounts.

Plan
Each of our programs has its own planning tool, that will help you estimate benefit amounts for yourself, spouses and dependents to plan for the future.

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January 25th, 2011
Social Security introduces a new Filing Experience

December 3rd, 2010
Under the Law No Social Security COLA for 2011

November 13th, 2010
A New Social Security Online

November 3rd, 2010
Social Security Fast-Track Disability Processes Get Even Faster

October 4th, 2010
Class Notice in American Council of the Blind Court Case

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Courtesy IDEO

REDESIGNING THE ONLINE EXPERIENCE

ASSIGNMENT

With increasing numbers of retirees and a budget crisis looming, the Social Security Administration (SSA) wanted to significantly increase the number of applicants filing online by 2015. Online filing reduces the cost of having field representatives process claims in the SSA's 1,400 regional offices.

RESPONSE

IDEO identified from its field research four kinds of online behavior (right), from "passengers"—retirees who'd need a lot of hand-holding to apply for benefits, and probably wouldn't do it online anyway—to "explorers," those who'd want to research every possible permutation. It then explored three different visual and tonal directions and developed recommendations for a bold, bright Web site to suit all four behaviors, with one-page filing, collapsible sections, and a visual calculator.

PASSENGERS
Offer the opportunity to learn more about and be coached through the retirement process using straightforward language. Allow them to pause the process and take time to consult with others when questions arise.

EXPLORERS
Give them the opportunity to experiment with different retirement scenarios. Offer unbiased information to expand their understanding of retirement.

PATHFINDERS
Show what the whole process will look like so they can plan in advance. Visualize multiple income sources all in one place.
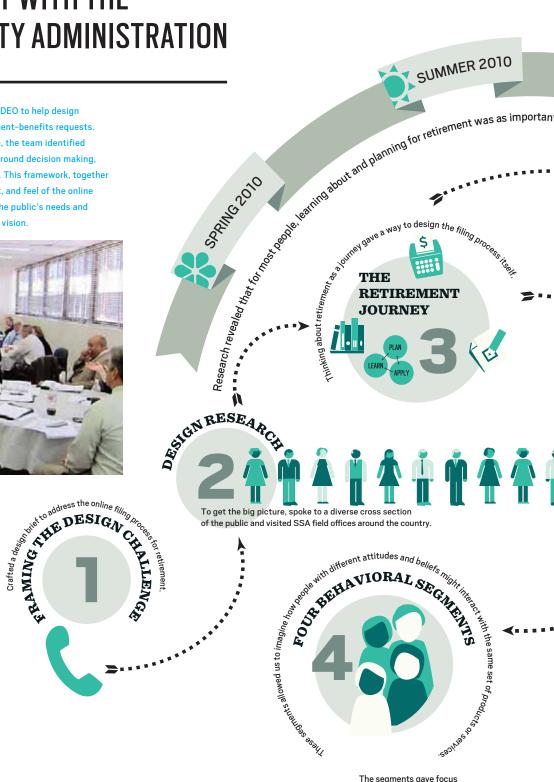
BYPASSERS
Provide the convenience of completing the application without visiting an office. Offer instant feedback to let them know that the process has been successful.

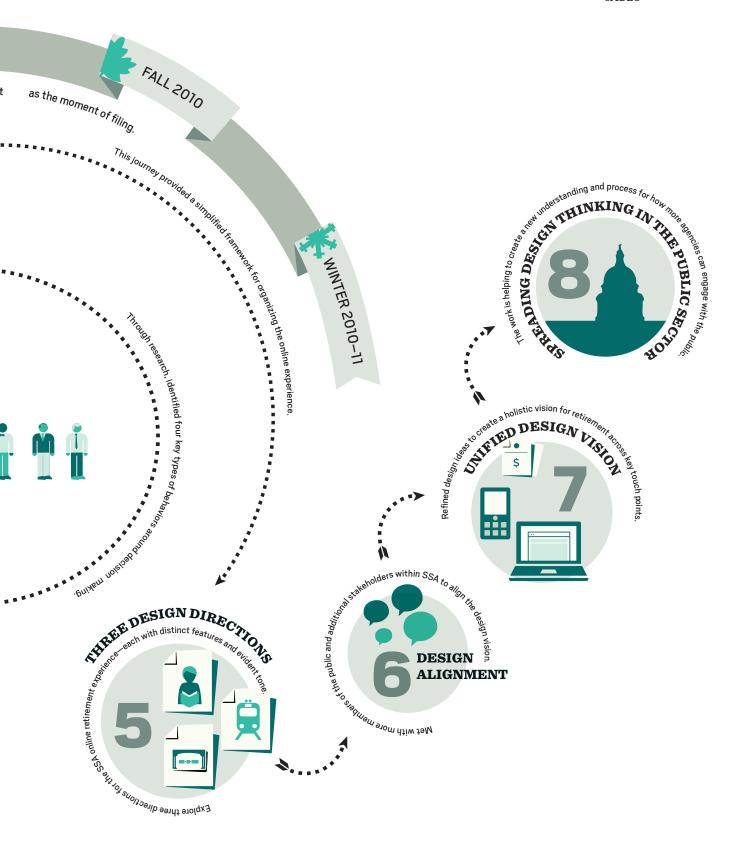# IDEO'S JOURNEY WITH THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

The Social Security Administration enlisted IDEO to help design a compelling, online process for filing retirement-benefits requests. Over the course of the design research phase, the team identified a retirement journey and four key behaviors around decision making, creating a new framework for the experience. This framework, together with deep collaboration around the tone, look, and feel of the online design, fueled an iterative cycle of meeting the public's needs and providing internal alignment around a shared vision.

IDEO WORKSHOP

SUMMER 2010

SPRING 2010

Research revealed that for most people, learning about and planning for retirement was as important

Thinking about retirement as a journey gave a way to design the filing process itself.

THE RETIREMENT JOURNEY

3

PLAN
LEARN APPLY

DESIGN RESEARCH

2

To get the big picture, spoke to a diverse cross section of the public and visited SSA field offices around the country.

Crafted a design brief to address the online filing process for retirement.

FRAMING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

1

These segments allowed us to imagine how people with different attitudes and beliefs might interact with the same set of products or services.

FOUR BEHAVIORAL SEGMENTS

4

The segments gave focus to design exploration.

FALL 2010

as the moment of filing.

This journey provided a simplified framework for organizing the online experience.

WINTER 2010–11

Through research, identified four key types of behaviors around decision making.

SPREADING DESIGN THINKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The work is helping to create a new understanding and process for how more agencies can engage with the public.

8

UNIFIED DESIGN VISION

Refined design ideas to create a holistic vision for retirement across key touch points.

7

THREE DESIGN DIRECTIONS—each with distinct features and evident tone.

5

Explore three directions for the SSA online retirement experience.

DESIGN ALIGNMENT

6

Met with more members of the public and additional stakeholders within SSA to align the design vision.

information design, and one being industry experience. For example, you can't do government work without knowing a lot about government."

A case in point is Hilary Hoeber, who joined the firm in 2004 with an education in international politics and organizational behavior and experience in both e-commerce and government. As business lead for IDEO's public sector practice, Hoeber has been piloting the rocky straits of the government acquisitions process, which include the notorious 30- to 40-page Requests for Proposals (RFPs). A successful bid requires exhaustive accounts of past performance and slavish adherence to specifications, down to typeface and margin size. "Right now it's a hot topic in D.C. how to simplify the acquisitions process," Hoeber says, "while still keeping it transparent and fair." Needless to say, IDEO is involved in this discussion, too.

The government acquisitions process is just one example of how technocratic thinking tends to ignore the human perspective. After the president set a goal of reducing energy consumption by 30 percent in all government buildings by 2015, the GSA began equipping its properties with smart technology: streamlining networks and monitoring and controlling energy use, with sensors hooked up to building dashboards—video monitors that display, in real time,

the energy performance of a building. The missing ingredient, it realized last year, was people. So the agency contracted IDEO to look at ways of motivating building occupants and managers to actively participate in reducing energy consumption (switching off lights, computers, and air-conditioning, for example). Among its proposals, IDEO suggested that individual tenants develop their own efficiency standards and make those programs easily shared between buildings. It produced five concept videos, one for each of the major stakeholders. "Our concern is that buildings and technology pieces are moving so fast that people aren't grasping the benefits," says Larry Melton, assistant commissioner of Facilities Management and Services Programs at the GSA. "In the commercial real estate industry, not just government, everyone's trying to figure out how to

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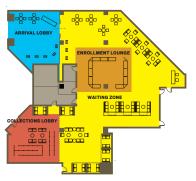

STREAMLINING THE WORK VISA PROCESS

ASSIGNMENT

Singapore depends heavily on foreign workers, and as a result, its work pass (visa) application process is the fastest in the world. As part of an ongoing review of its business processes, the country's Ministry of Manpower (MOM) decided to try to raise the overall standard of customer service rather than simply focusing on speed and efficiency. IDEO won a competitive bid between ten consultancies and was asked to look at the redesign of an Employment Pass Service Center as well as the overall business process design.

RESPONSE

Initial work focused on the service center, prototyping solutions to improve the experience, including an arrival lobby with check-in kiosks, and replacing a formidably long counter with a doughnut-shaped "enrollment bar" and cabanas for family appointments. The longer-term project was to overhaul the work pass processing system. IDEO and MOM identified 28 projects, ranging from improved communications to card collection and an organzational restructure. "Creating prototypes to test ideas helped sharpen the solutions," MOM project director Penny Han says, "and avoid the situation where we have to subsequently spend more money and time through rework."

WORK PASS CENTER

ARRIVAL LOBBY
ENROLLMENT LOUNGE
WAITING ZONE
COLLECTIONS LOBBY

DEMOCRACIA ACTIVA

LOCAL OUTREACH

ASSIGNMENT

Voting in Peru is mandatory, but corruption is rife, lowering public faith in the process. As part of a campaign facilitated by the nonprofit Academy for Educational Development (AED), IDEO was asked to look into ways of promoting civic engagement and encouraging people to think of the government as accountable in order to restore faith in democracy. The aim was to provide a variety of methods of participation rather than simply focusing on the "moment at the ballot box." Hence, more systemic change might be achieved.

RESPONSE

As part of the campaign, IDEO prototyped a participatory sticker project, inviting local people at events in Cusco to apply "Arregla Esto!" (Fix This!) stickers to anything they felt needed to be addressed by the government. The project proved successful, with a sticker even applied to a police station (implying corruption within), but it faltered when the AED was accused of corporate misconduct by its main funding source, the United States Agency for International Development. The IDEO design work was transitioned to a local advertising agency, which is now taking some of the concepts and principles forward.

MONITORING REAL

ASSIGNMENT

The General Services Administration Public Buildings Service owns and operates the largest real estate portfolio in the country. Charged by the president with reducing by 30 percent energy consumption in its buildings by 2015, the agency has been introducing smart technology into new and existing structures. It asked IDEO to develop an experimental blueprint for the look and function of building dashboards—which monitor energy use and other information in real time.

RESPONSE

In this short-term project, IDEO explored ways in which a network of building dashboards might motivate behavior change among different stakeholders, often with conflicting priorities. (For instance, property managers set thermostats at what they deemed to be the optimal temperatures, but tenants complained that it was too cold.) One idea was to encourage occupants to come up with their own incentive schemes: "Instead of D.C. national office communicating down what to do, you are letting the ideas bubble up to the surface," IDEO's global head of sustainability, Steve Bishop, says, "so it's less about specific competition than fostering 'co-opetition.'"
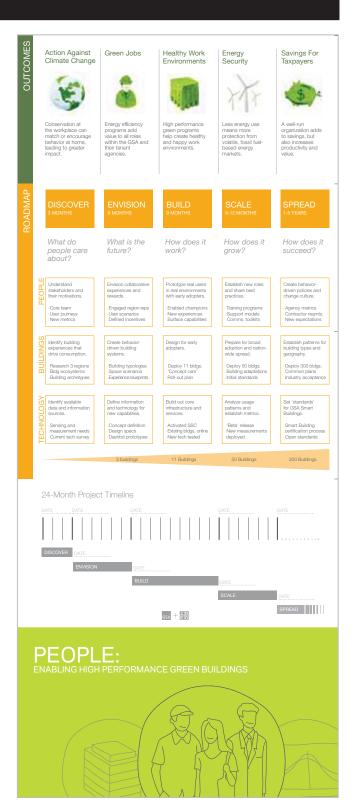
OBAMA MANDATE

30%
2015
E.O.13514

General Services Administration
High Performance Green Buildings

The President has ordered that all government buildings reduce energy 30% below 2003 levels by the year 2015. It's an inspiring goal, and as America's largest real estate agency, the GSA is under pressure from this and other initiatives to lead the country and show tangible results.

To start, the GSA is focused on the buildings it owns that use the most energy, adding technology to make them smarter. It is also building a Sustainability Support Center, a centralized hub of energy and data from government buildings across the nation. But technology alone won't do it.

We need a different approach.

APPROACH

Buildings   People   Technology

The GSA believes that the smartest part of smart buildings is people.

PEOPLE

Building Occupants	Property Managers	Tenant Agencies	Regional Executives	Central Offices
Program Experts	Local Experts	Agency Experts	Domain Experts	Federal Experts
· Seek to engage with environment at work	· Lack time to be proactive on 2015 goals	· Rely on personal motivation for efficiency	· See success patterns across portfolio	· Seek consistency across regions
· Need more than numbers to act	· Need tools to reward participation	· Are an important ally	· Innovate via experiments	· Establish goals with metrics

PRINCIPLES

A dashboard will do more than display data. It will also...

1	2	3	4	5
Communicate at a Human Scale	Enable Better Decisions	Inspire Participation	Spread Knowledge	Propagate New Norms
Turn efficiency into a personal act. Display information in terms people easily understand.	It's what people do with the data that matters. Keep tenants happy while meeting energy goals.	With the right information, turn rules into invitations to create high performance workplaces that are green.	Facilitate program exchange to cultivate best practices and foster collaboration.	Change organizational attitudes toward energy efficiency with the right tools and metrics.

CONCEPTS

Energy Per Person	Efficiency & Happiness	Rewards & Incentives	Program Success	Progress Measurement
HIGH	ENERGY USE			ENERGY FORECAST
Displays personal share of energy used by the building.	Measures tenant happiness like it measures energy.	Rewards agencies for leading successful efficiency programs.	Evaluates programs to be shared across a building portfolio.	Identifies emerging standards that help everyone reach goals.

Courtesy IDEO

7 KEYS TO DESIGN & INNOVATION FOR GOVERNMENT

OUTCOMES

Action Against Climate Change	Green Jobs	Healthy Work Environments	Energy Security	Savings For Taxpayers
Conservation at the workplace can match or encourage behavior at home, leading to greater impact.	Energy efficiency programs add value to all roles within the GSA and their tenant agencies.	High performance green programs help create healthy and happy work environments.	Less energy use means more protection from volatile, fossil fuel-based energy markets.	A well-run organization adds to savings, but also increases productivity and value.

ROADMAP

DISCOVER 3 MONTHS	ENVISION 6 MONTHS	BUILD 9 MONTHS	SCALE 6-12 MONTHS	SPREAD 1-5 YEARS
What do people care about?	*What is the future?*	*How does it work?*	*How does it grow?*	*How does it succeed?*

PEOPLE

Understand stakeholders and their motivations. Core team User journeys New metrics	Envision collaborative experiences and rewards. Engaged region reps User scenarios Defined incentives	Prototype real users in real environments with early adopters. Enabled champions New experiences Surface capabilities	Establish new roles and share best practices. Training programs Support models Comms. toolkits	Create behavior-driven policies and change culture. Agency metrics Contractor reqmts. New expectations

BUILDINGS

Identify building experiences that drive consumption. Research 3 regions Bldg ecosystems Building archetypes	Create behavior-driven building systems. Building typologies Space scenarios Experience blueprints	Design for early adopters. Deploy 11 bldgs. 'Concept cars' Roll-out plan	Prepare for broad adoption and nation-wide spread. Deploy 50 bldgs. Building adaptations Initial standards	Establish patterns for building types and geography. Deploy 300 bldgs. Common plans Industry acceptance

TECHNOLOGY

Identify available data and information sources. Sensing and measurement needs Current tech survey	Define information and technology for new capabilities. Concept definition Design specs Dashbd prototypes	Build out core infrastructure and services. Activated SSC Existing bldgs. online New tech tested	Analyze usage patterns and establish metrics. 'Beta' release New measurements deployed	Set 'standards' for GSA Smart Buildings. Smart Building certification process Open standards

3 buildings — 11 Buildings — 50 Buildings — 300 Buildings

24-Month Project Timeline

DATE   DATE   DATE   DATE   DATE

DISCOVER — DATE
ENVISION — DATE
BUILD — DATE
SCALE — DATE
SPREAD

GSA + IDEO

PEOPLE:
ENABLING HIGH PERFORMANCE GREEN BUILDINGS

START WITH CITIZENS
Even in complex problem-solving situations, a human-centered approach can lead to simple steps that encourage change. Like most organizations we've come across, government groups and agencies want to serve the public better. But to do so, they need to get better at understanding the people they serve. What are their needs and aspirations? Often, a few genuine stories from the people who will actually use or benefit from a service can galvanize even large organizations.

FORGET THE "AVERAGE"
There's no "average" American, Peruvian, or Singaporean. While private-sector businesses pick and choose the people for whom they design, governments can't. In the end, it's design for all—and not just the obvious or easy-to-reach people. Rather than design for the ever-elusive everyman or -woman, search out common types of behaviors that span broad demographics. There are usually a few dominant behaviors that highlight opportunities. Target these and a team's efforts to design change will resonate with the maximum number of people.

VISUALIZE CHANGE
Words are easy, plentiful, and often up for debate and discussion. In contrast, design drives organizations to demonstrate and envision change faster. Show tangible expressions of ideas through rich visualizations and prototypes and people will naturally get on the same page more quickly.

SIMPLIFY IN THE FACE OF COMPLEXITY
Large-scale systems are complex. They need to be in order to solve the kinds of problems they've been built around. Additionally, political shifts add to the complexity, altering processes and goals. The result? Systems that feel so burdensome that even simple problems seem impossible to solve. Fortunately, we've found that looking for the root of an issue helps a team to translate complex systems into simple ideas that allow organizations to debate, accept, or reject paths forward.

PROTOTYPE BEFORE PILOTING
Often, political pressure to succeed fast requires releasing a pilot into the world. Sometimes these solutions succeed, but when they fail, an entire effort may be abandoned until the next year or next administration. Prototyping in small, quick ways allows for in-the-world trials without the risk of high-stakes failure. This approach encourages learning—and even failure—to happen in a far more manageable way. And if an idea is truly bad, it's best that it fail on a small scale.

ENVISION A FUTURE TOGETHER
The scale of government and governmental agencies is vast, and oftentimes career employees have tackled large-scale challenges for years. Delivering complete design solutions doesn't take into account these employees' tremendous expertise around a topic. Neither does it lead to a future state that everyone can own. Co-design, or envisioning a future together, does. It also acknowledges that career employees will be around, working to make the future, long after the design team, advisers, and political appointees leave.

SHARE THE MISSION
Design is an act of optimism. Addressing governmental challenges with the idea of building toward something versus creating a fix to a problem is essential. Sharing a mission can reawaken hope in both government employees and designers who want to make real change happen. With this approach, barriers and boundaries of protocol, hierarchy, and politics fall by the wayside. —*Fred Dust and Hilary Hoeber*

WOUNDED WARRIORS

About a year ago, Clark Realty Capital was in the midst of planning several thousand homes for military families at Fort Belvoir, in Virginia. "As we approached the end of our development, we stepped back and asked, 'We're going to have a lot of wounded soldiers living here—are these homes that we're designing to the bare-minimum code good enough?'" recalls Casey Nolan, a director at the company. "We quickly concluded, no, there had to be a better way."

After preliminary in-house research, Nolan reached out to IDEO, which embarked on an intensive three-month process, interviewing wounded veterans and their families, observing the challenges they faced living in traditional homes and apartments, and visiting rehabilitation centers. "The ultimate brief was, how would you build a home for wounded warriors and their families?" says IDEO's Altay Sendil. Adds team member Hilary Hoeber, "Something a little bit more unspoken was, how do we build a home that's accessible but that *everybody* would want to live in?"

IDEO produced three videos and a comprehensive book that helped Clark define a program for a universally designed home. Clark then organized a design competition, which Michael Graves & Associates won. The first prototypes should be completed on Veterans Day, in November. "It's only two homes," Nolan says, "but we have more sites selected within our project."

—*Martin C. Pedersen*

PATIO

KITCHEN

IDEO produced a book that outlined the special challenges facing disabled veterans and served as a template for two prototype houses now under construction. A concept floor plan is shown here.

Michael Graves & Associates have proposed the first universally designed homes for Fort Belvoir, in Virginia. The architects used IDEO research to inform their design, which includes (clockwise from above) an introvert/extrovert patio, an all-access bathroom, and an eat-live-play kitchen.

BATHROOM

1. ZIPPER WALL
2. WELCOME FOYER
3. EAT-LIVE-PLAY KITCHEN
4. WIND-DOWN FAMILY ROOM
5. BACK-TO-NATURE BATH
6. MASTERFUL BEDROOM
7. INTROVERT/EXTROVERT PATIO
8. ADAPTABLE SUITE
9. INFINITE STORAGE GARAGE
10. SUNBEAM CORRIDORS
11. HOME-BASE BEDROOM
12. CHILDREN'S NEVER-DIRTY BATHROOM
13. BEDROOM
14. ALL-ACCESS BATHROOM
15. UTILITY/LAUNDRY ROOM

Courtesy IDEO

incentivize customers. It's forcing us to do our business differently. Are we there yet? No."

In Singapore, a country whose workforce is 30 percent imported, IDEO's human-centered perspective was seen as a way of improving a super-efficient but cold system for processing work passes (visas). IDEO's initial recommendations, subsequently implemented by

In Singapore the buzz has even reached the upper echelons of government. "They're saying they want to be a design-thinking nation," Hilary Hoeber says.

a Singapore architect, were focused on the country's Employment Pass Service Center (EPSC), which had a certain anonymous, system-driven flavor—hard plastic chairs, an imposing linear service counter, number assignments, and authoritarian signs. In their place came upholstered seats and cabanas for families to meet with agents, a doughnut-shaped counter, check-in terminals, and screens that call visitors to the desk by name rather than number. According to Penny Han, a project director at the Ministry of Manpower, the redesigned EPSC has now hosted visits from over 80 public and private sector organizations curious to see the results of the IDEO engagement. The buzz has even reached the upper echelons of government. "They're saying they want to be a design-thinking nation." Hoeber says.

IDEO's ongoing effort to help Singapore overhaul the entire process of issuing work passes is similarly aimed at humanizing the experience: a less cumbersome and opaque appeals process, an improved back-end technical system, simpler work-pass registration and collection, and a reduction in the variety of passes. Equally important, the tone of communications will become less formal, less florid, and more direct. Even the tone of communications is prototyped. "You should see the original letters. They're all 'herewith,' 'for to,' 'if then'—legal ramifications and all that stuff," says Ilya Prokopoff, IDEO's partner in charge of the project. "I just saw a really nice prototype of the letter you receive when you're told you are able to go to Singapore. It says, 'You can come to Singapore.'"

One striking thing about IDEO is that its culture seems to emanate from all of its people, rather than sounding like a well-honed pitch crafted by a figurehead. Innovation, it has realized, comes from diverse teams working together, and it has relayed this exact message to government. "I think they were looking for individuals to change entire organizations," Dust says. "We were saying, 'If you find an innovative individual, bring in a team with them; bring in four people.' Because you can't change a massive agency or culture by putting one person there."

Design in the twenty-first century, after all, is not really about brilliant solo designers imposing solutions on lucky recipients. It is more about designers introducing methods that can be adopted and adapted by their host organizations. This is a big, ambitious redefinition of the term, far removed from the widely held view that design is ultimately about the styling of consumer products to boost the sales curve and, eventually, the landfill. To that extent, IDEO's government work seems a worthy and important project for the profession as a whole. ∎