

## Self-assessment by Coonor Behal

SUBMITTED ON 07 FEB 2026



### A summary about me:

I am an innovation strategist and facilitator with deep expertise in using human-centered and design thinking methods to make sure organizations are solving the right problems with their customers' needs in mind. I bring rigor and intellectual tenacity to areas that all too often seem too "squishy" or "ambiguous" to be prioritized. I've guided clients such as Starbucks, Microsoft, SAP Concur, and Deloitte to question their underlying assumptions, test hypotheses, and use empathic methods to more deeply understand their customers – resulting in improvements to both solution development and organizational culture. I excel in evangelizing human-centered design ways of thinking and building the capacity of organizations to adopt them.

### My academic and professional background:

1. BA in Journalism from New York University (summa cum laude) makes me a very adept asker of probing questions to get to truth, which is essential when I conducts research interviews with customers and stakeholders.
2. My MA in International Relations from The University of Chicago makes me an excellent critical thinker, for example to be able to clearly identify correlation v. causation. Ever the interdisciplinary, I chose this MA program because it allowed me to take classes across all graduate courses, including law, business, religion, anthropology, etc..., making me an excellent dot-connector. Coonor's graduate studies allows her to bring the much-needed rigor of the social sciences to business innovation.
3. My brief, unhappy stint in the world of international nonprofit development opened my eyes to the importance of organizational culture, and made me aware of my natural instinct to listen to end users and solve the right problems creatively. Without knowing it at the time, I was trying to do human-centered design!
4. My longer, happier tenure in Big 4 management consulting exposed me to methods such as Design Thinking and helped me create Organizational Improv™. It also fueled the fire I have to find better, more efficient ways of working and doing innovation, ultimately leading me to found Mindhatch in 2014.

### I currently work as a/at:

Founder & CEO (independent consultant) at Mindhatch <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/>

### My LinkedIn profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/coonorbehal/>

### My social media channels:

I do not create content on social media any longer, but you can find my thought leadership writing at <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/blog/> (some have been crossposted on Medium in the past)



## My educational background:

BA, Journalism New York University, Phi Beta Kappa inductee Junior Year. Minors: Politics; Cinema Studies  
MA, International Relations, University of Chicago  
Service Design Intensive, Adaptive Path, Oct 2014  
Ethnographic Research Design and Innovation, EPIC People, July 2018  
How to Uplevel Stakeholder Management for User Researchers, Maven, June 2024  
AI x Design Thinking Workshop Series, IDEO, October 2025  
AI Fluency: Framework & Foundations, Anthropic, October 2025  
The AI-Supported Design Research Process, Maven, November 2025  
Service Design Masterclass Series Professional Accreditation, Service Design Network, December 2025

## The following theories are the key components of my approach to service design:

**Abductive Reasoning:** I use this often in my work and training to promote the idea of "what could be possible" and to get comfortable with inference and acting in the absence of complete information and certainty.

**Liberating Structures:** informs my facilitation and how I take groups through an experience.

**Organizational Improv™:** my creation, is used in all of my work to promote creativity, co-creation, innovation, etc...

**Design Thinking, Strategy, and Research:** deeply informs my focus on customers and discovering latent and unmet needs.

**IDEO's HCD Model:** I use this often when teaching newcomers as I find it to be the best articulation of design thinking and doesn't collapse too many stages together. I also use it often to demonstrate how being "creative" and "innovative" and "customer-centric" does not mean you ignore the needs and capabilities of your business/organization.

**Co-Creation & Participatory Design:** I encourage the ethos of sharing ideas and prototypes with real customers as early as possible.

**Lateral Thinking:** one method I use to encourage and inspire non-linear approaches to design and problem-solving.

## These are the most relevant resources I base my work on and I recommend them as a body of knowledge in service design:

"The Creative Habit" by Twyla Tharp  
"Emergent Strategy" by Adrienne Maree Brown  
"Playing to Win" by AG Lafley and Roger L Martin  
"Design Thinking for Strategic Innovation" by Idris Mootee  
"This is Service Design Doing" by Stickdorn/Hormess/Lawrence/Schneider  
"Gamestorming" by Gray/Brown/Macanuto  
"Universal Methods of Design" by Martin and Hanington  
"101 Design Methods" by Kumar  
"Change by Design" by Tim Brown  
"Communicating the New" by Erwin  
"Just Enough Research" by Erika Hall  
"A More Beautiful Question" by Warren Berger  
"Kill the Company" by Lisa Bodell  
"Training to Imagine" by Kat Koppett



"Creativity Inc" by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace

"Creative Intelligence" by Bruce Nussbaum

"The Design of Business" by Roger L Martin

I have X years of working experience in service design:

12

My working experience in service design includes involvement in:

- Service design projects
- Service design consultancy
- Service design training
- Professional speaking

I have particular experience in the following service sectors:

Financial services, tech, CPG, beverage, consulting, nonprofits, government agencies

I have conducted X service design projects that aim at creating improvements or innovations within organisations:

25

These are the service design projects I have successfully delivered:

I have done so many over the years, but here are several projects with the information I am allowed to share due to NDA restrictions. I am happy to provide more project examples upon request.

| Gift Card | Designed and executed a plan for foundational research that produced the business line's first-ever set of qualitative customer data. Led 1:1 discovery interviews; identified pain points/opportunities; facilitated ideation sessions; and designed and analyzed diary missions in dScout platform. Coached and upskilled business owners in design thinking methodologies and mindsets.

| Sustainable Cup | Designed and led weekly sprints and customer research. Sprints included: problem statement definition, assumption mapping, ideation, and idea evaluation. Solution opportunity areas spanned complex customer behaviors and mindsets, supply chain, and disposal technologies, as well as single-use and closed-loop systems.

| Store Partner Digital Experience | Led technology team to better understand the barista/shift supervisor user experience with "back of house" and "front of house" digital tools. Guided high-level stakeholders to reframe their business-only problem into a human-centered challenge. Designed and executed a research plan that produced a holistic, visual map of the Store Partner digital journey, which identified improvement opportunities. Designed and facilitated a virtual "Artifact Workshop" that encouraged stakeholders to engage with the visual diagram and craft implementation strategies.

| CPG Brand Innovation | Prepared a 10-person CPG Innovation team to partner for cross-brand innovation initiatives by designing and facilitating a 4-month mock design sprint. Additional responsibilities included 1:1 coaching and developing a Miro toolkit and resource library resource for the team's future reference. Personalized Gifting - Collaborated with Digital Customer Experiences teams to deepen insights gained from prior research that "personalized gifting" of beverages had potential for both revenue and customer delight. Designed exploratory research, concept usability tests, and discussion guides for three different digital solutions.

I have provided service design training sessions and/or other educational experiences for X years:

12

My philosophy as a trainer is:

1. I should speak less in total than the participants



2. Always have a co-facilitator. If training via Zoom, always have a Technical Producer.
3. Bridge theory into practice at every opportunity, even if just by sharing anecdotes from my work
4. Design for learning outcomes but also experience outcomes. I want to design for "How do I want participants to FEEL before? During? After"?
5. Aim for a break every 90mins maximum
6. Capture feedback in the room, not only post-session
7. Design for all learning modalities and participant styles (introvert, extrovert, verbal, physical, etc...)
8. Learning is culture and culture is learning. Learning can be applied only up to and until the organizational culture stops it.
9. Favor documentation over conversation

**These are the service design training sessions and/or other educational experiences I've facilitated within the last year:**

In addition to custom trainings, I have several "core" trainings I developed years ago and continue to deliver. You can find those here:

<https://www.mindhatchllc.com/employee-engagement/#designthinking> and also here: <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/services/design-thinking/design-thinking-workshops/>

**I mostly provide my training offerings in the following language(s):**

English

**I mostly provide my training offerings in the following countries/cities:**

United States / all cities

**I cover the following topics during my training offerings:**

- Definition of service design
- Differentiation of service design to other approaches like design thinking, service marketing and service branding
- Relationship of service design to agile, scrum and lean
- User research/deep customer insights
- Designing and conducting co-creation workshops
- Creativity and ideation processes
- Visualisation techniques
- Facilitation skills for service design
- Prototyping of services
- Implementation of service design concepts
- Business model development
- Measuring impact of service design, relating it to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Building in-house service design capabilities
- Service design for cultural change
- Organisational development
- Change management
- improvisation skills for service design

**My training participants typically have the following level of experience:**

- Novice (new to service design)
- Fundamental (basic knowledge)
- Advanced (practical application)

**These are the service design methods and tools that I use during my sessions:**

1:1 empathy interviews, rapid prototyping, empathy maps, Organizational Improv™ and service storming, various ideation techniques, customer needs statements.



## After successfully attending my training sessions, participants will typically be able to:

### Design Thinking: 101

This fast-paced, collaborative, and experiential workshop puts groups through the paces of learning the design thinking process by doing. Participants will work in teams as they apply each phase of the process (Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test) to a notional yet universally shared challenge (ex: reimagine the airline passenger experience) and get exposure to and experience with tools such as 1-on-1 empathy interviews, customer personas, empathy maps, etc. and apply rapid prototyping techniques that result in actual solutions to the given challenge. Participants will also get quick opportunities to experience design thinking mindsets through experiential, improv-based activities that are directly relevant to each design thinking stage and method they will learn and apply to the challenge.

At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Define design thinking and understand how to use it as a process for user-centered creative problem solving.
- Explain all the steps of design thinking as developed by the Stanford d.School: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test.
- Interpret and execute select design research, ideation, and prototyping methods.
- Utilize design thinking tools such as interview guides, personas, and other design thinking artifacts.

### Design Thinking: Application

This training turns Design Thinking: 101 in to an actual working session. Participants will be put through the paces once again, but this time will apply more advanced design thinking methods and tools toward a real business challenge.

In addition to the learning outcomes from Design Thinking: 101, at the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Apply design thinking concepts and methods to a variety of work initiatives.
- Discover actionable insights from real customers and create documentation of those insights that can be used for future solution development and/or re-design.
- Conduct basic design research with real-world customers and/or stakeholders.
- Scope the "right" problem to solve by uncovering customer needs and wants.

## I apply the following evaluation tools to make sure the participants have understood the content of my sessions and gained the expected competencies and skills:

1. Debriefs (group, small group, and individual)
2. Observation and coaching during active application of methods to case challenges
3. Participant surveys after the session
4. During 1:1 or group-based follow on coaching

## I systematically evaluate and improve my offerings based on feedback. These are examples of feedback that have led to improvements:

I adapt my trainings to the needs of the group all the time, the vast majority of my training interventions are customized. Because of participant and client feedback - particularly in the early years of my career - my training programs now:

1. Provide ample "breathing" room with less packed agendas
2. Appeal to a variety of learning modalities
3. Include more case examples from my work
4. Include an offer of post-training follow up and accountability
5. Provide handouts and other take-home materials
6. Learning about any environmental concerns before asking groups to rely on paper products
7. Making sure the walls of a training room are not carpeted and thus won't allow any paper to be hung up!!! :)

## I have participated in the following service design-related activities in order to stay up to date, share my experiences with peers and receive their supervision within the last 12 months:

- SDN Masterclass
- SDN Chapter Activity



- Attempted to found an SDN Chapter in Seattle

### I actively support the local or national service design community through:

Membership in SDN

Co-founding member of Design Strategist professional group in Seattle

### I have participated as a speaker in the following events:

Below is a sample of my in-person and virtual speaking and panel engagements. Some of these links have been archived on my website, please let me know if you have trouble accessing anything you need to visit.

date: June 2016

title of event: Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) Annual Conference

title of your talk: Improv & Design Thinking

link to the event, if available

link to the video of your talk, if available

Date: May 5 & 6, 2022

Location: Washington DC

Title of event: Inflectracon 2022 - Inflectra's Annual Agile and Devops Conference

Title of your talk: Human Centered Design in Agile or Devops Environment

Link to the event, if available: [https://www.inflectracon.com/speakers-2022/coonoor-behal-mindhatch?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.inflectracon.com/speakers-2022/coonoor-behal-mindhatch?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Link to the video of your talk, if available

Date: November 8, 2017

Title of event: Improv, Design Thinking, & Cultures of Innovation by Applied Improvisation Network (AIN)

Title of your talk: Improv, Design Thinking, & Cultures of Innovation

Link to the event, if available: <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/improv-design-thinking-innovation/>

Link to the video of your talk, if available

Date: October 30, 2019

Title of event: New Work New Rules presented by Microsoft Canada, inspired by this case study:

<https://www.steelcase.com/research/articles/new-work-new-rules/>

Title of your talk: "How Design and Technology Can Help Hyper-Collaborative Teams Thrive in the New World of Work"

Link to the event, if available:

Link to the video of your talk, if available:

Date: February 11, 2020: Title of event: Enhancing Design with Data Panel Discussion by SeaDuxx (Seattle Women of Design and UX)

Title of your talk:

Link to the event, if available: <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/enhancing-design-with-data-panel-discussion-feb-11th-2020/>

Link to the video of your talk, if available

Date: March 26 - 28, 2020

Location: Santa Barbara, California

Title of event: EPIC International Design Panel

Title of your talk:

Link to the event, if available: <https://www.strategicplay.com/epic-international-summit>

Link to the video of your talk, if available

Date: September 18, 2020

Location: Virtual



Title of event: Staying Innovative in a Complex World: EPIC Conversation with Mindhatch Founder, Coonoor Behal

Title of your talk: Staying Innovative in a Complex World: EPIC Conversation with Mindhatch Founder, Coonoor Behal

Link to the event, if available: <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/staying-innovative-in-a-complex-world-epic-conversation-with-mindhatch-founder-coonoor-behal/>

Link to the video of your talk: <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/staying-innovative-in-a-complex-world-epic-conversation-with-mindhatch-founder-coonoor-behal/>

**I have published the following books/articles on service design and related fields:**

You can find my writing here: <https://www.mindhatchllc.com/blog/>

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