

Effectively shifting gears between the different phases of the Innovation Pipeline

FOR DIGITAL INNOVATION

An innovation pipeline is typically split into **problem fit** (is the solution desirable to customers?), **solution fit** (is there a way to capture value back?) and **growth fit** (is the solution technically feasible and scalable?). First you uncover the right problems to solve, then you propose ways to solve them. Once validated through experimentation, you scale-up. Below methodologies typically

converge with different stages in the innovation pipeline. In our work with Fortune 500 companies, we channel innovation processes through a pipeline to achieve just that. One of the big challenges in this Innovation Pipeline, is to know which tools to use, at what moment, and when to switch from one phase to the next. Here are some insights and best practices to help you out.

WHEN YOU'RE IN THE DESIGN THINKING PHASE:

01 Who should be trained first?

Senior leadership should first be trained and must have bought into Design Thinking, Lean Startup, Business Modelling and Agile approaches in terms of must-win strategy so they clearly see and value the strategic importance of the approaches for future business growth.

02 Which tools & methods should project teams learn?

Project leads must have a good working knowledge of how Design Thinking, Lean Startup, Business Modelling and Agile Development processes, tools and methods work in practice, either from previous experience or by shadowing other coaches.

03 When to include technical profiles in design thinking?

Technical Agile profiles must be included in the project teams during Design Thinking, Lean Startup and Business Modelling phases without pushing any technical constraints on the team. They should silently think about the types of technologies, skills and resources that could be needed once market-fit has been reached in the future.

04 Who should own the project?

Project teams should have a single product owner throughout the entire innovation pipeline phases from execution to implementation phases. This is essential to prevent loss of momentum, motivation, ensure stakeholder management and deep knowledge of the project ins and outs. The project owner should also have a clear understanding of the vision, the customer, the business and the developer profiles whilst behaving like a 'corporate intrapreneur' ideally with a broad T-profile.

05 Should the same project owner remain until agile development?

The initial project owner during Design Thinking & Lean Startup stages should continue as owner into the Agile Development phase so that implementation is not just 'thrown over the fence' at Agile teams and will also keep the teams stable.

06 How should teams be formed?

Multi-disciplinary project teams must be setup spanning as many functions as possible, for example: HR, sales, marketing, technology, finance, legal etc to ensure multiple perspectives are included as well as driving more creative ideas.

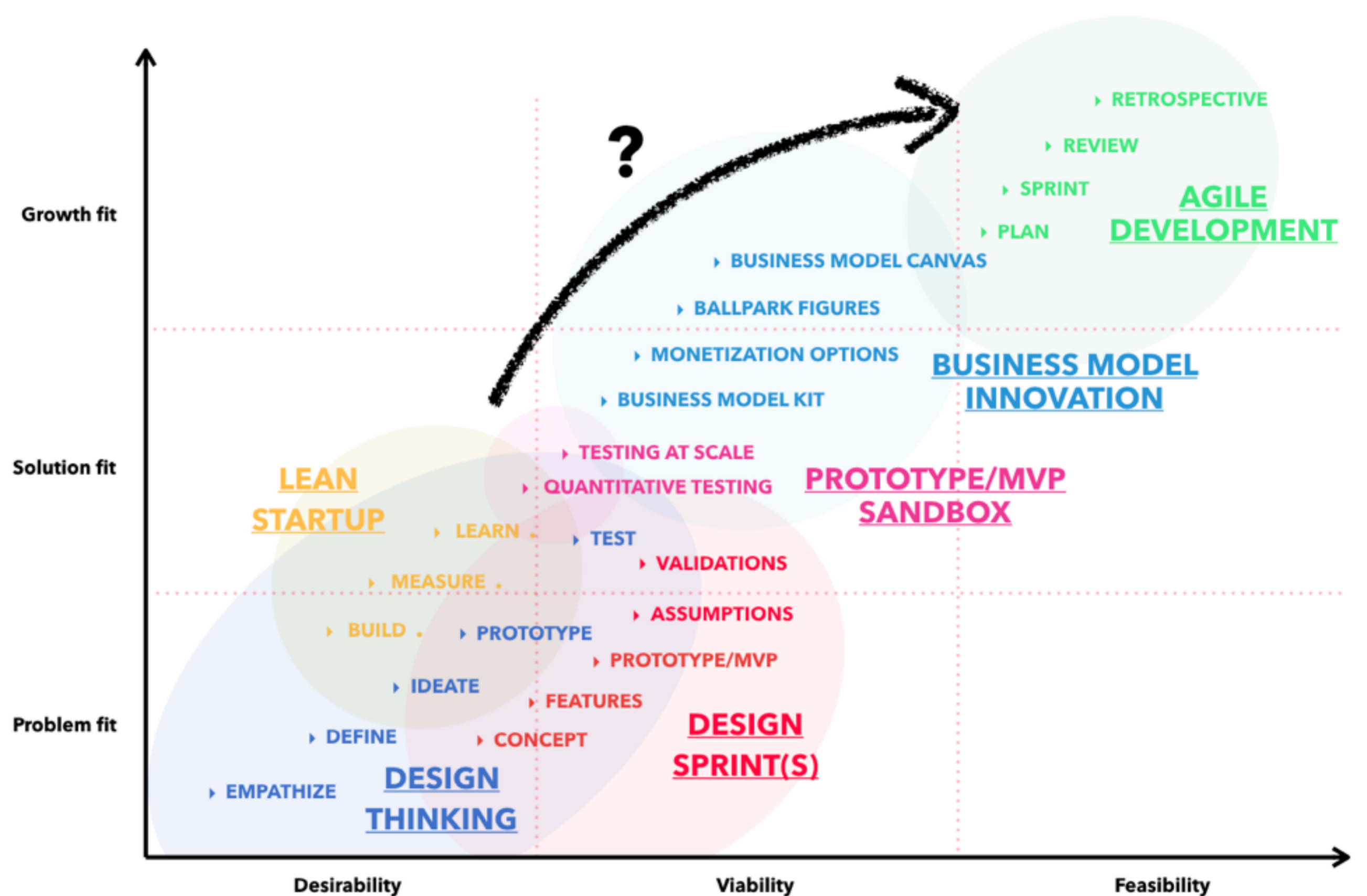
WHEN YOU'RE IN THE LEAN STARTUP PHASE:

07 Consider customer desirability first and foremost

Teams should think in this order: (1) customer desirability, (2) business model feasibility and then, and only then (3) technical viability. Teams typically instinctively think about how can we build it at the operational solution level first. Once you have validation customers actually want your solution (and there is a validated business case where you can capture value back), you can then look at how to build it. There is no point building a business case or technical feasibility analysis if you don't know with evidence that your customers actually want your solution in the first place.

08 When should MVP/prototypes be production coded?

Dumb prototypes should be used for as long as possible, ideally until after the business model has been prototyped and tested. This will allow them to be easily and quickly updatable without wasting time and resources on unvalidated production code.



09 Who should be accountable for failures?

Product owners and teams should be accountable for when failures happen, not if they happen (read: fail fast, fail often, fail early). You should celebrate your failures, they will save you unnecessary resource wastages.

10 Kill your own solutions

Tenth commandment: 'thou shalt not fall in love with thy solution'. Project teams must be aware of their loss aversion, ambiguity, anchoring, bandwagon and conformity biases (to name a few). Team members should be their own most critical critics. More about that in our article about [16 cognitive biases that can kill your decision making](#).

11 Should I test customer validation at scale?

Dumb prototypes or MVP's should enter into a scale-up sandbox phase in order to test and validate assumptions quantitatively before entering into the business model prototyping and testing phase shortly before Agile development starts. This will ensure your validations hold at scale as you know what knowledge and insights you are looking to validate at this stage.

WHEN YOU'RE IN THE BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION PHASE:

12 Run workshops in parallel

Design sprints and business model innovation sessions should be run in parallel to prevent the project becoming stalled. For instance, when at the provisioning for resources at the inception phase for Agile Development which can often take time.

13 When should a technology feasibility check be done?

Before making the transition from Design Thinking, Lean Startup and Business Modelling, a technology feasibility or 'sanity-check' must be carried out. It is extremely difficult for operational teams to accept, but there is absolutely no point in considering technology feasibility before customer problems and business case have been fully validated with evidence. More on how to do this can be found here in our [validation guide](#).

14 Allow projects to move back as well as forward

If the project fails a technology sense-check just before Agile

Development resource allocation, it should be allowed to re-enter into the 'knowing what to build' or 'problem/solution discovery' phase again for a limited time before facing a final pivot or kill meeting.

15 How to keep project team momentum going?

If the project fails a technology sense-check just before Agile Development resource allocation, it should be allowed to re-enter into the 'knowing what to build' or 'problem/solution discovery' phase again for a limited time.

16 How to keep project team momentum going

In order to keep the team together and keep momentum if there is an anticipated delay (for instance from shifting between CAPEX/OPEX) the team should: (1) Further refine the minimum viable product (MVP) or dumb prototype in short 3-day design sprints to gain additional validated learning from customers about critical assumptions. (2) Run additional business model innovation workshops to test outstanding assumptions through clearly defined experiment cards

TRANSITIONING TO THE AGILE PHASE:

17 Seamlessly transitioning to agile development

Designers and prototypers developing minimal viable products (MVP's) or 'dumb' clickable prototypes should pre-define workflows using tools like Sketch, Invision, Zeplin, Marvel, Supernova and many others in order to prevent duplicate coding efforts across phases. There are for instance many new and emerging tools that can export full production code or working assets. Make sure you have your prototyping MVP tools and processes clearly defined up-front.

Need help with your next innovation challenge? Let's have a chat.

Board of Innovation
www.boardofinnovation.com