

INTERIM IMPERATIVES E-BOOK

PIONEERING THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE

Rapid Innovation: Crafting a Design-Led Strategy

NORTH HIGHLAND

COVID-19 HAS LEFT A PERMANENT STAMP ON THE WORLD. UNCERTAINTY IS EVERYWHERE, STRENGTHENING THE CALL FOR ADAPTATION.

We're approaching a monumental stepping stone on our path to the post-pandemic world. Following the immediacy of COVID-19 response, this next phase will force you to forge distinctions between the provisional realities of the next 12 to 18 months and your three or five-year strategy. The unique conditions of the foreseeable future introduce a host of unknowns that you must thoughtfully and intentionally explore while you advance towards a durable and adaptive recovery.

In approaching the path forward, we believe clarity of perspective comes when considering implications and critical considerations across customers, the workforce, and operations. It's impossible to know what the months and years ahead will look like, but we can start to place bets based on what we're seeing in the continuously changing environment around us. In this e-book, we explore the role of design thinking in enabling organizations to place informed bets as the foreseeable future comes into focus.

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MAKING SENSE OF THE WORLD OF POSSIBILITY

The anticipatory trends that we've explored throughout this e-book are just that—trends. They are informed by assumptions related to vaccination, regulation, social norms, and recessionary pressure that change by the minute. As such, these trends will also continue to change. Navigating this complexity calls for a living construct—a strategic approach guided by the principles of design thinking. A design-led mindset helps you wrap your arms around ambiguity and evaluate

the impact of emerging insights as they evolve. Accompanying the evaluation of external trends, you should also use insights gleaned inside your organization to refine your approach continuously. For example, periodic retrospectives on COVID-19 furloughs may illuminate opportunities to evolve your contingent worker strategy in the near-term future.

Approaching the foreseeable future, the customer, workforce, and operational insights we explore in this e-book series are a directional foundation. Now, you need to filter them through the context of your unique use case(s), whether it be redefining your value proposition for future stakeholder needs, identifying a new supplier mix, or designing a virtual employee engagement strategy. In this final installment of our series, we'll show you how.

When evaluating anticipatory trends and weak signals in the market, a design thinking-based approach helps you to plan for the things you don't know. It enables you to shape a transformation strategy, place bets, and lay the structural foundation for execution. It involves an intentional process of divergent and convergent thinking. You diverge to identify possibilities and alternatives. You converge to identify what is feasible, desirable, and viable. Without divergence, you're likely to constrain your range of options and default to the most apparent or incremental answer. You're also more likely to form options based on pre-COVID-19 assumptions that are no longer valid.

A design-led approach enables targeted exploration that surfaces new value creation opportunities in a novel context and establishes early alignment, buy-in, and collaboration. It can help you place informed bets on where to focus as the near-term future comes into view—enabling you to adapt as you learn more each day. And by illuminating opportunity amid uncertainty, it positions you to adopt a positive, proactive posture in approaching what might otherwise feel like a foreboding future.

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Ultimately, a design thinking mindset should be ingrained in the way your organization operates. The uncertainty of the foreseeable future necessitates constant re-evaluation and ideation across all aspects of your business. Crafting a design-led strategy with Rapid Innovation plays out in two key phases:

PHASE 1 DISCOVER | Understand drivers of change and identify opportunities.

- Identify your unique business problem statement and the impacted audience(s).
- Then, frame the associated trends and catalysts for change.
- Once you've identified trends, map the change signals to your business to understand how your products, services, and capabilities are relevant to the challenges.
- Create prospective future scenarios for your business, followed by ideation around potential opportunities to address these scenarios.

PHASE 2 DEFINE | Ideate on multiple solution possibilities and define value propositions for each.

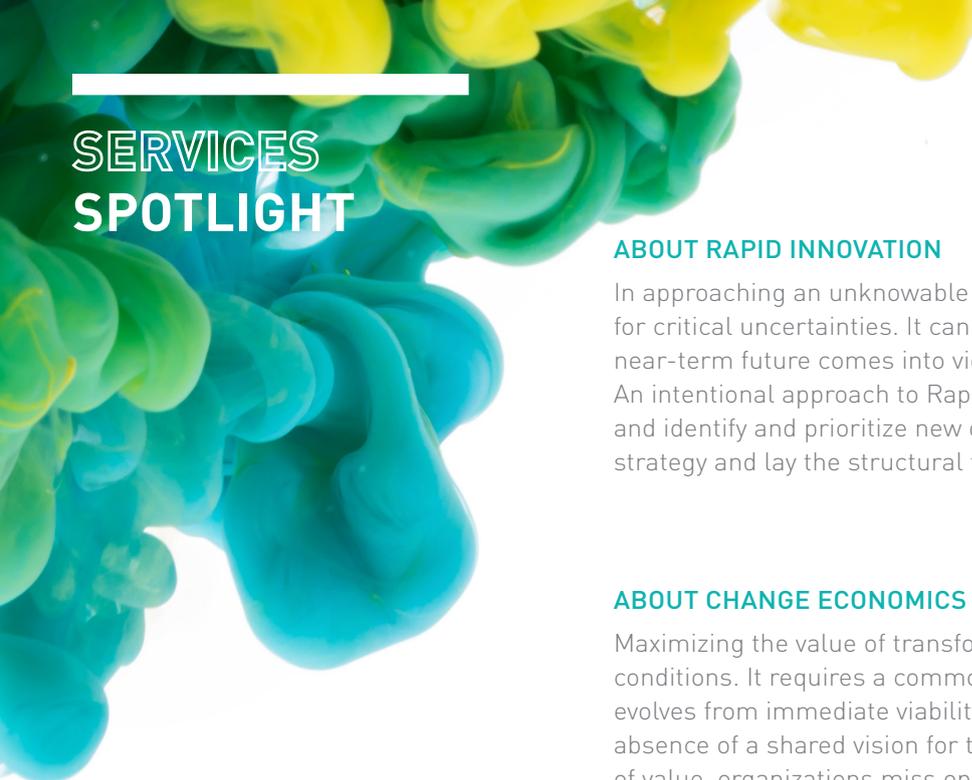
- Develop specific problem statements for each of your opportunities and align the associated KPIs.
- From there, your team can brainstorm ideas for new concepts or find ways to repackage existing services in your business.
- For each short-listed concept, create a business case to understand the anticipated value and create a roadmap for how you'll move into prototyping and development.

Design thinking can help you make sense of the world of possibility. Yet, you only have so much cash, workforce capacity, and time in a day. As you begin to map your strategy for the next 12 to 18 months, it's equally important that you focus on allocating limited resources for maximum impact. Specifically, the pandemic is a sobering reminder that the speed of change and disruption is accelerating, so minimizing risk and enhancing flexibility should carry substantial weight in the go-forward strategic agenda. Bring your organization to the table to evaluate and prioritize prospective initiatives—looking comprehensively at the value for customers, employees, stakeholders, operational efficiency, financial performance, risk mitigation, and flexibility. The result? A strategy that not only maximizes value, but ensures greater alignment, faster adoption, and accelerated results.¹

As you emerge from COVID-19 and stabilize your organization, near-term future trends, and their implications for customers, the workforce, and operations, offer a clarifying perspective—a starting point for the foreseeable future. Yet as we look ahead, the only certainty is that these forces will change. Design thinking takes emerging global trends and signals of change and makes them personal. It breathes life into a system that helps you make sense of a world filled with uncertainty—all in the context of your organization's strategic aspirations and values.

Only then can you carve a future path that's uniquely yours.

Design thinking can help you make sense of the world of possibility. And when you only have so much cash, capacity, and time in a day, our approach is the best way to ensure you have solutions that maximize value across customer, workforce, and operational interests.



SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

ABOUT RAPID INNOVATION

In approaching an unknowable future, a design thinking mindset allows you to plan for critical uncertainties. It can help you place informed bets on where to focus as the near-term future comes into view—enabling you to adapt as you learn more each day. An intentional approach to Rapid Innovation helps you understand the drivers of change and identify and prioritize new opportunities. It enables you to shape a transformation strategy and lay the structural foundation for execution.

ABOUT CHANGE ECONOMICS

Maximizing the value of transformation calls for agility in response to uncertain conditions. It requires a common framework for prioritizing new initiatives as your focus evolves from immediate viability towards long-term durability and adaptability. In the absence of a shared vision for transformation that encompasses a holistic understanding of value, organizations miss opportunities to prioritize incremental improvement for increased and accelerated returns. Change EconomicsSM delivers a 360-degree view of the value drivers of change and transformation, enabling the smarter evaluation and prioritization of new initiatives.

¹ "Defining and Maximizing the Value of Transformation," North Highland, Apr. 2020.

ABOUT NORTH HIGHLAND

North Highland is a leading change and transformation consulting firm, recognized for its deep expertise and collaborative, action-oriented approach. Invested in our client's success and powered by the belief that everything begins and ends with people, we bring together the brightest minds to create positive change and transform businesses through customer, workforce and operational lenses. Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., and regularly named a best place to work, North Highland is an employee-owned firm with more than 5,000 consultants worldwide and 65+ offices around the globe. The firm is a member of Cordence Worldwide (www.cordence.com), a global management consulting alliance. For more information, visit northhighland.com and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

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Heather is a Senior Director at Sparks Grove, Experience Design Capability of North Highland. She is a dynamic leader with the ability to motivate and inspire teams to deliver customer-centric programs that drive brand equity and sales. Heather has over 20 years of experience in marketing strategy, advertising, and experience design across a variety of leading consumer and B2B brands.



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Kelly is a leader in North Highland's customer experience practice. She brings over 20 years of experience leading customer insights and helping companies transform by understanding and improving their customers' experiences. Her expertise in uncovering insights and enabling CX-optimized organizations has delivered real, sustainable results for Fortune 500 companies.



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Andy has over nine years of experience leading employee engagement, communications, and leadership alignment projects. He is an expert in mobilizing transformation programs and helping organizations clarify direction and vision. In the last few years of his career, Andy has focused on telecommunications, working across U.K. and U.S. businesses.