Unlock business productivity in just 8 weeks

Your guide to our discovery and definition process

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Elsewhen

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Introduction

This guide explores how your organisation can accelerate its transformation to intelligent use of digital technology. You can achieve this by moving from traditional manual processes for serving customers and managing people, tasks and assets – to tailored digital solutions and products that unlock business productivity.

We examine a proven 8-week process used by digital consultancy Elsewhen for discovery and definition – an ideal way for CIOs, CTOs, COOs, CDOs and other business leaders to accelerate digital transformation and unlock productivity gains.

We also present success stories of how we've delivered this for a diverse range of organisations, including Spotify, Inmarsat, Secret Escapes, Zego and Mastercard.

The new digital landscape

The evolving digital landscape is rapidly transforming the way people work – and how customers engage with organisations.

Many businesses were forced into remote working by the pandemic – and most of these will stay that way, at least partially. Organisations are also embracing faster adoption of business automation and AI, to improve productivity and gain competitive advantage. Customers have increasing expectations of getting what they want from a business via self-service digital channels, particularly on mobile devices.

This new era of digital transformation has created challenges – and opportunities. One such opportunity is for organisations to transition business processes away from reliance on spreadsheets and siloed databases – towards customised digital ways of working that give employees and customers a consumer-grade experience. These digital solutions will be tailored or built around a company's specific business processes – improving productivity, supporting future growth, making remote work easier, and better serving customers.

Moving beyond manual business processes

In recent years, businesses have had to define new ways of working – and new ways to measure and track productivity over time.

For many organisations, the shift into an all-remote operating model introduced new challenges related to the stack of internal digital technologies and tools that are used to perform critical tasks.

General-purpose office software solutions, such as spreadsheets, are often used as ad hoc tools for managing business processes. They are a readily available and familiar way for multiple team members to collect and share data. Alternatively, off-the-shelf SaaS work management tools are used.

Both these approaches may 'plug the gap' for a while – but are not good long-term solutions. They are designed for a general business audience, making them hard to customise for your specific use case. They still require a large amount of manual activity to manage and are hard to maintain. This means they are not cost-effective – and they don't scale well as your needs grow. This is especially true for large enterprises with complex requirements and edge cases.

Companies must be able to provide teams with the right technology for their tasks. In order to streamline work, unlock productivity gains and react quickly to new business opportunities, leaders should work with their teams to create digital processes that are based on their needs and can evolve over time.

The evolution of data-driven business

Modern digital business processes can bring together multiple data sources – to enable a clear real-time business overview, and drive better decision-making.

These digital processes and products are evolving in maturity, from tools that simply visualise data – to systems that analyse data and facilitate action. The three key stages of this evolution can be described as Exploratory, Explanatory and Actionable.

Exploratory

In this stage, systems are designed to help users discover insights. Data is somewhat organised, but charts require manual inspection to identify trends or patterns. For example, this might include a solution that visualises electricity usage over time but presents no conclusions or insights.

Explanatory

In this phase, systems are designed to present insight. Tailored findings and suggestions can be presented to the user. For example, an electricity usage tool might highlight times of high energy consumption and give tips to reduce this.

Actionable

This is the holy grail of digital systems. In this stage, solutions are designed to interpret data (perhaps using AI) and directly facilitate actions. The solution not only gathers and presents insight, but also acts as a hub for decision-making – where actions can be taken directly. For example, an electricity usage tool might give recommendations and enable users to switch energy supply to a choice of more cost-effective tariffs.

Determining your digital transformation goals

Regardless of the size of your organisation, having the right digital systems can help you improve efficiency, reduce cost and raise customer satisfaction.

In the immediate term, it contributes to increased employee effectiveness, with less time spent on routine manual tasks and easier access to valuable data insights. In the mid-term, it creates the foundation of new revenue streams.

To determine what you want from digital transformation, you must first identify and understand the needs of your business and customers. How can you lead or react quickly to changing market conditions that call for continuous innovation? What productivity blockers are holding your employees back from achieving their top performance? What do your customers want to achieve – and how can digital solutions make that happen more easily?

An example of this we have encountered in many recent projects (see case studies section) is how business data can be used in new ways to create value. By moving data beyond siloed internal systems, you can create powerful dashboards and tools to accelerate team workflows and enable wider insights. You can also provide self-service portals that enable customers to answer their needs quickly and easily.

A lean and agile process is key in ensuring your digital transformation is addressing these needs and is set up to deliver value. No business wants to spend time and money on a digital transformation project, only to find later it did not meet the actual needs of the business. That's why organisations work with Elsewhen to reduce the risk around digital transformation – by running an 8-week process for discovery and definition of the true requirements and goals.

The discovery process uncovers the key opportunities for achieving efficiency, revenue and productivity gains. It also equips decision-makers with vital information regarding the expected cost and impact of the project.

By working through the 8-week process, you uncover where problems currently exist, and how you can tackle them with efficient digital processes and automation. You'll also explore how technologies such as cloud, software-as-a-service (SaaS), artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can provide insights and create business value.

This is the start of an ongoing journey, where different layers of your organisation take part in transforming their future digital business environments.

Our 8 week process
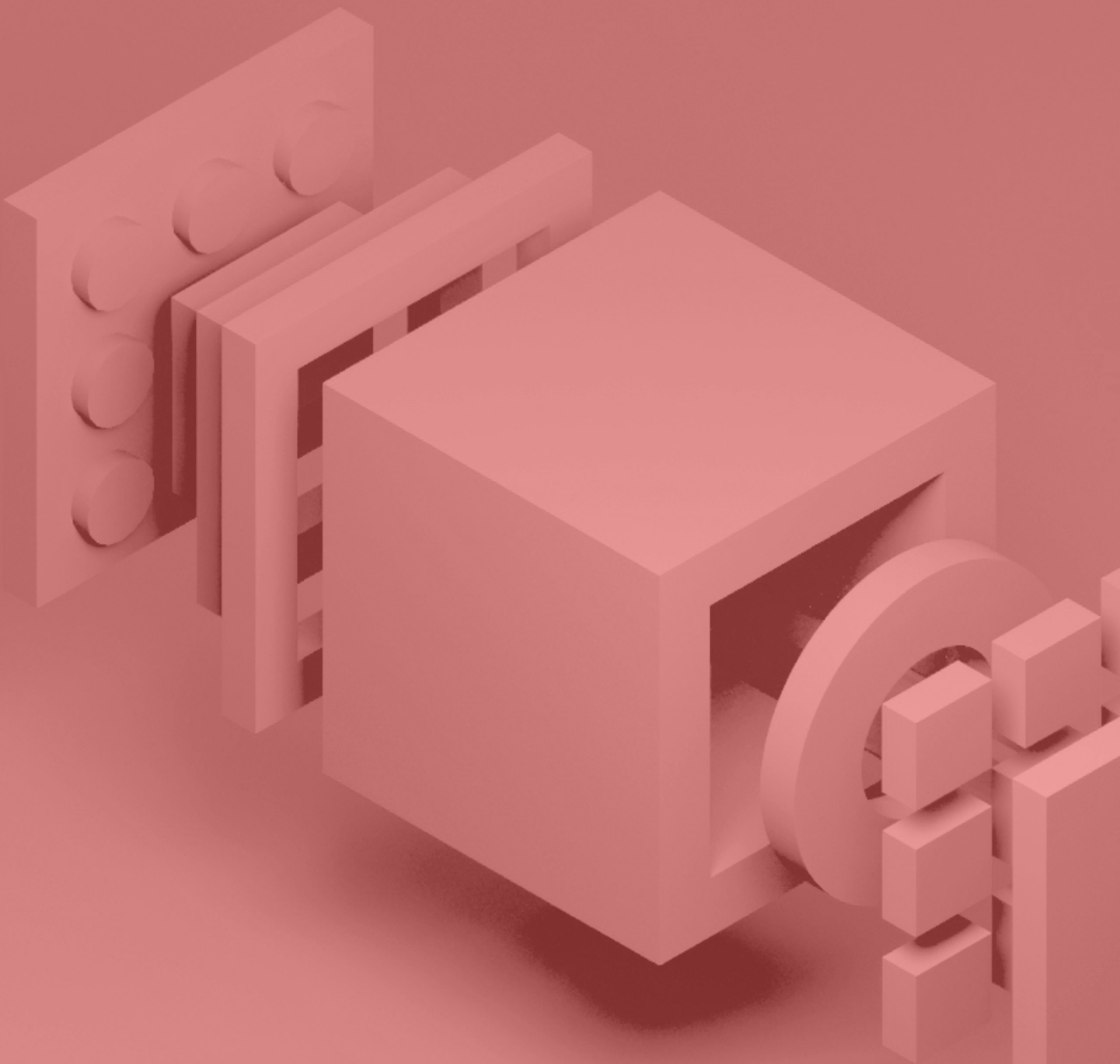
Overview of our 8-week process

At Elsewhen, we work with businesses to accelerate digital transformation through an 8-week discovery and definition process.

The aim of this process is to equip your organisation with a solid understanding of user and customer needs, create digital prototypes, and compile a sound business case to support decision-making on next steps.

What do we mean by discovery and definition?
In the process of discovery, we aim to create a shared understanding of the needs of your users and customers – and propose potential solutions to address those. We identify your problem areas – where existing manual or complex processes and workflows can be digitally transformed.

We also look at your current technological environment, with the aim of leveraging its capabilities more effectively wherever possible.

Defining your business transformation
Once we have an understanding of the needs of your users and customers, and the problems to solve, we can start to define solutions.

For example, we may define the scope for a minimum viable product (MVP) by prioritising different opportunities – and articulating the value proposition of the new digital solution. Specifically, we define the MVP based on speed to launch, value creation and learning mindset. We do this by testing that the solution is technically feasible, commercially viable, highly usable and valuable in context of your real-world business environment.

After this definition, your business is equipped with a good understanding of the prioritised user and customer groups, their needs and problems – and a series of actions to solve these issues and create value.

Advantages of the definition process

The definition process is designed to minimise the risk associated with a digital transformation project. Specifically, we mitigate value risk, usability risk, feasibility risk and business viability risk to ensure you are creating the right solutions.

By using a proven methodology, your business is able to articulate a roadmap, estimate costs and start delivering value to users and customers within a short period of time.

On the following pages, we explore the process in more detail, week by week...

Week 1

Kick off

The first week of the process activates the project team, and creates a shared understanding of the problem space. It is important to create organisational momentum from very early on, and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved.

Weeks 2

Research and interviews

We start week 2 with workshops to uncover the key data flows and processes that comprise your current systems. On the third day, we start conducting interviews with users.

Week 3

Evaluate needs and technology

Week 3 is focused on analysing user needs, and mapping of the systems that are currently in use by your business.

Week 4

Identify jobs and prioritise MVP features

Week 4 is a more structured synthesis of our findings.

Week 5

Starting the solution design

In week 5 we move from research into solution design.

Week 6

Tech validation and prototyping

Week 6 is an opportunity to validate the solution, testing visual prototypes to get feedback from potential users.

Week 7

Designing the future

Referring back to the service blueprint we created in week 1 of the process, we can now generate a future version of how things should work – and where we are hoping to make the biggest impact.

Week 8

Bringing everything together

Week 8 is the final week of the MVP definition process.

Week 1

Kick off

The first week of the process activates the project team, and creates a shared understanding of the problem space. It is important to create organisational momentum from very early on, and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved.

A typical first week will include two-to-four workshops, in which we will create a service blueprint of your current processes and workflows – and map out the users and customers for digital solutions. It is important to get this mapping right, as it will allow us to decide which roles and individuals should be interviewed in week 2.

This mapping is a valuable exercise in its own right. It uncovers inefficiencies that may enable quick and simple improvements to your existing processes.

During this week, we also build collaboration by setting up a working group, issuing regular updates, and organising a range of other team activities.
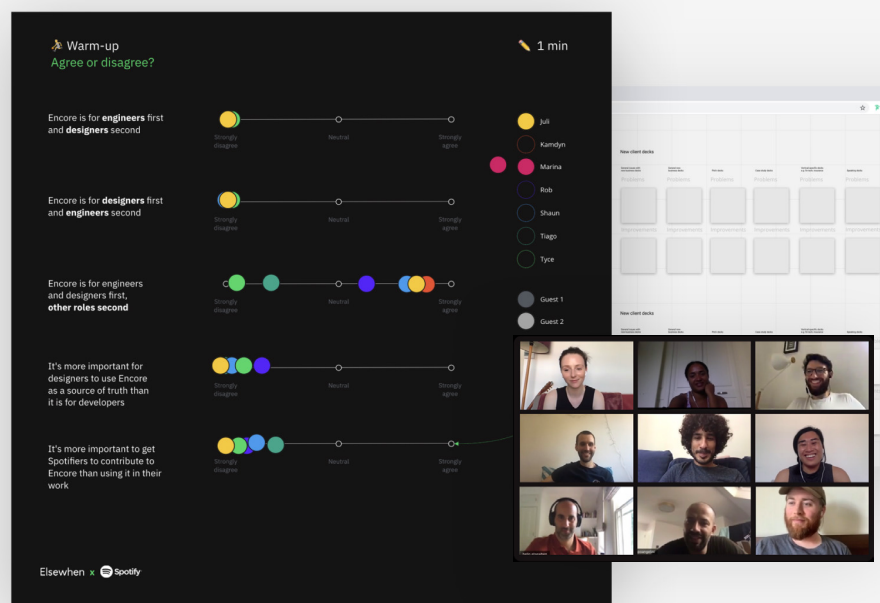
Research and interviews

We start week 2 with workshops to uncover the key data flows and processes that comprise your current systems. On the third day, we start conducting interviews with users.

Each interview lasts 45–60 minutes, and is a deep-dive into how work is done and customers are served. We identify where the problems are, and what blockers are holding your business back from achieving top performance.

We use collaborative digital tools such as Notion, to create a database of insights and learnings from this activity, providing a valuable resource for your future decision-making.
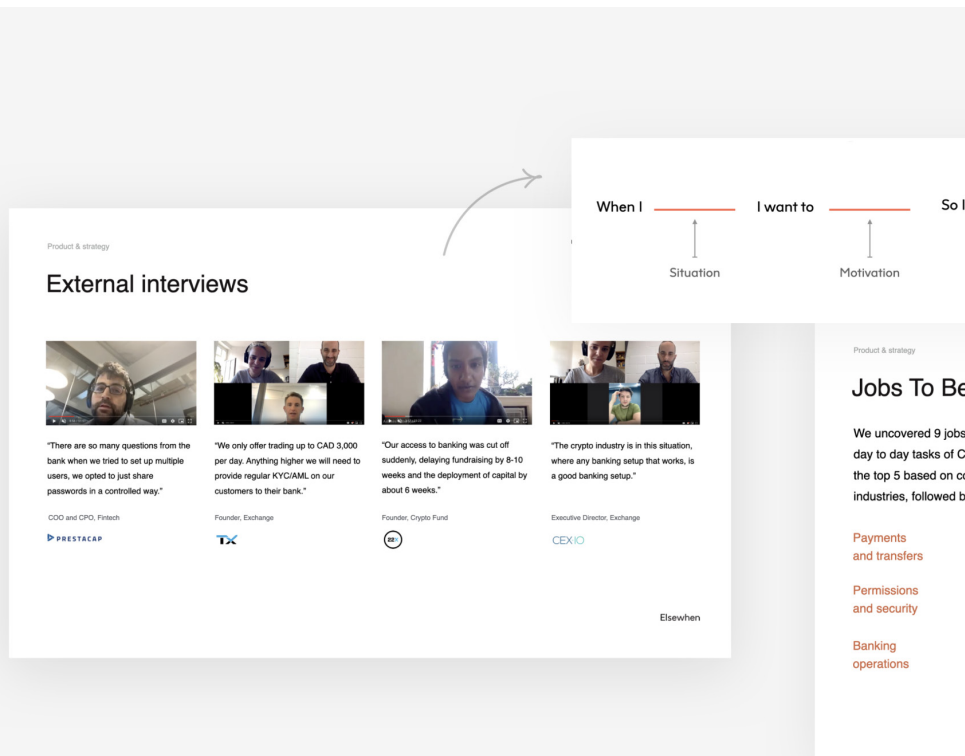
Evaluate needs and technology

Week 3 is focused on analysing user needs, and mapping of the systems that are currently in use by your business.

We apply the insights from interviews to create user and customer personas that highlight specific needs. We also identify and prioritise areas for improvement in your existing processes.

Running in parallel to that activity, we also begin an evaluation of the technological stack that exists within your organisation. This could include internal and external data feeds, any off-the-shelf software currently utilised, and any application programming interfaces (APIs) available.

Although this evaluation may vary for organisations with different levels of technical maturity, the idea stays the same. We use what is available to reduce waste, and map out what changes will be required.
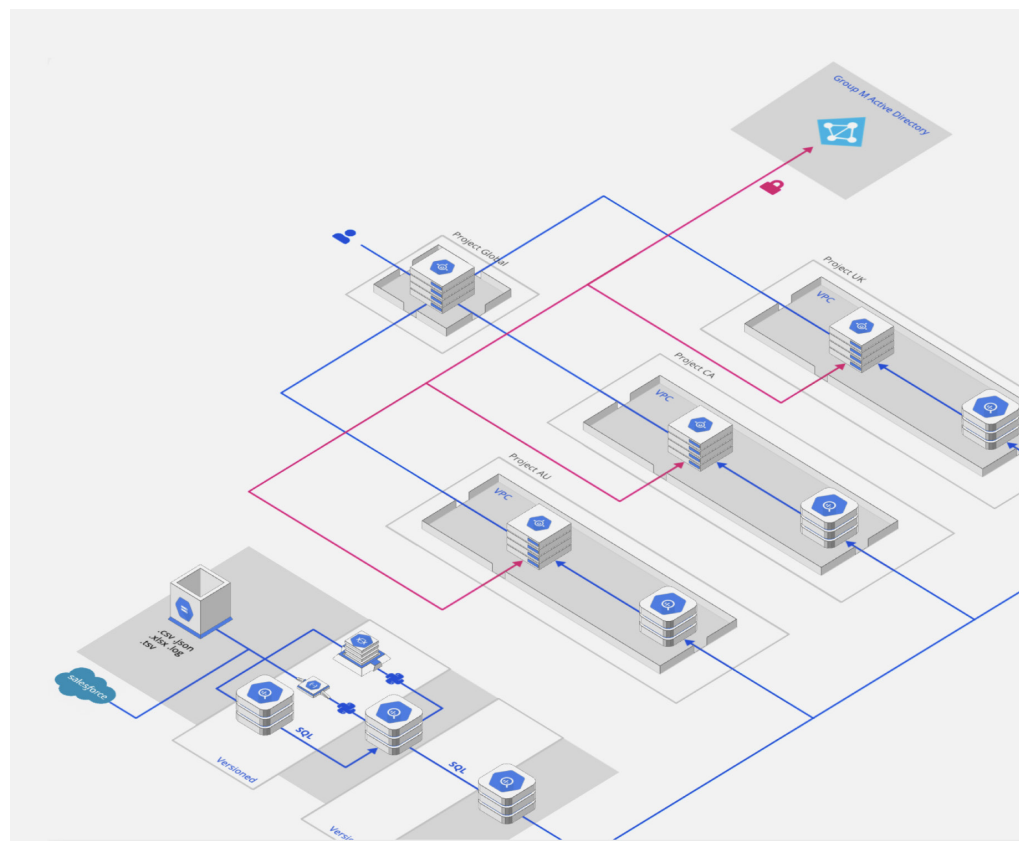
Identify jobs and prioritise MVP features

Week 4 is a more structured synthesis of our findings.

At Elsewhen, we use Jobs to be Done (JTBD) as our go-to framework for analysing user and customer needs. In a nutshell, JTBD focuses on what users and customers are actually trying to accomplish, rather than on what they do today.

Applying this framework helps us focus on the needs – rather than on how a specific process is done. Concentrating on these needs helps you avoid replicating your existing inefficient solutions or unproductive processes.

The identified jobs then form the basis of a list of opportunities. For each opportunity, we detail the problems found and the supporting evidence – such as insights from the interviews, relevant data points or specific time measurements. By doing so, teams are required to spend meaningful time grounding the problems and designing high level solutions.

For each opportunity, we also provide our hypothesis – and suggest experiments to test this with. The problems, hypotheses and experiments (PHE) are recorded on a set of digital cards for discussion, analysis & action.

This week ends with a prioritisation session, at which we assign values to each opportunity. Here we apply the RICE framework (Reach, Impact, Confidence, Effort). This indicates the potential reach and impact of each opportunity, and our confidence in this – versus the effort required to execute an experiment for each.

We finish this week with a set of prioritised opportunities and a deep understanding of the problem space. Now it's time to move into solutions.

Week 5

Starting the solution design

In week 5 we move from research into solution design.

At this stage, we hold a mid-project review, discussing progress with the project's steering group. Our focus is on value being delivered to the business and the key learnings so far.

We map out your required data flows – and any gaps that need to be bridged. We will use our design and technical skills to uncover requirements for solutions that will meet the opportunities and challenges outlined in the mapping.

We start the week with a workshop to create the visual language that will extend the brand to the digital domain. This session is an opportunity to evaluate your company's design system and assets, and explore how to use them in new digital solutions. We apply the principle that 'data rules design' – defining key rules and metrics for the MVP.

We also consider a range of key questions – to help us outline the solutions for the problem we are focusing on. We develop a step-by-step model of the user journey, based on our features prioritisation. This will then be tested with users to validate our hypotheses.

By this stage in the project, your business will already have gained a good understanding of what existing systems and software might influence your solution. We may also specify simple but powerful integrations that will provide data to enable the optimal customer experience.
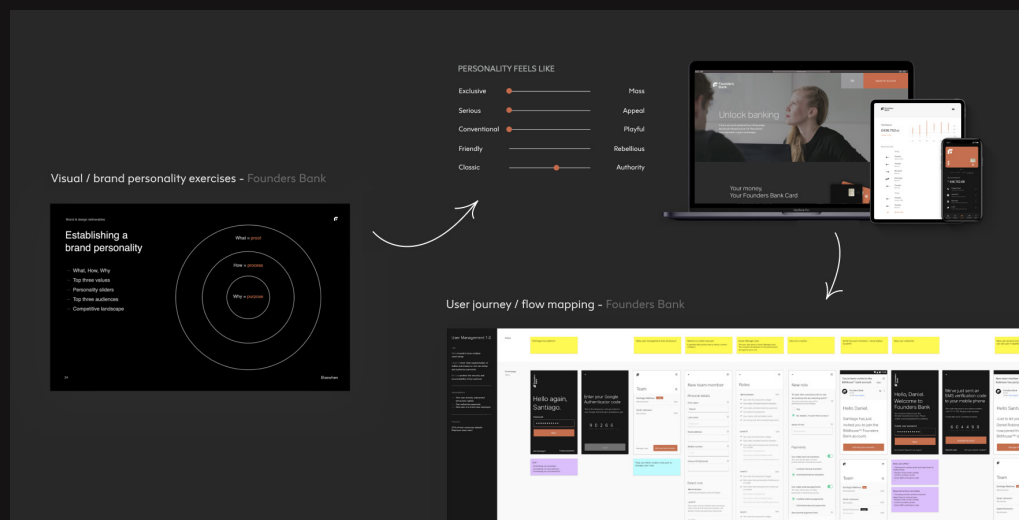
Tech validation and prototyping

Week 6 is an opportunity to validate the solution, testing visual prototypes to get feedback from potential users.

We visualise the main steps that your users or customers will go through when using the solution, and the main information that would be presented to them. In this way, we shorten feedback loops and can iterate quickly and incrementally. Even a small set of screen designs makes it easier for non-technical stakeholders to imagine a real working product – and provide valuable feedback.

When done correctly, prototyping is also a great vehicle for building positive momentum and buy-in across your organisation.

By this stage of the project, you will have a solid approach for implementation. That will include an architecture of the solution, a decision on development stack, an understanding of third-party dependencies, and the required skill-set for building the solution.

With the prototype in continuous iteration mode, and the technical knowledge we have gathered, the last two weeks of our process are focused on the 'to-be' state of your new digital solution.

Week 7

Designing the future

Referring back to the service blueprint we created in week 1 of the process, we can now generate a future version of how things should work – and where we are hoping to make the biggest impact.

By building our blueprint of the desired state in a collaborative tool (we typically use Miro and Figma), we can keep this always up-to-date with the team's decisions – and ensure that incremental improvements are tracked in a shared environment.

Applying our knowledge acquired over the previous 6 weeks, we articulate a desired state that is evidence-based and informs our digital transformation roadmap.

At this stage, we prioritise the steps of our roadmap as Now, Next or Later. This categorisation gives you flexibility for future implementation, and maintains the iterative nature of the process. At the same time, the roadmap is backed with a structured agile development plan, so everyone on the team is aware of the value of each item.

Having a roadmap at this stage is a good basis for future digital evolution. It also helps you share your vision with wider management and stakeholders – creating excitement and gaining buy-in on the required budgeting for the transformation project.
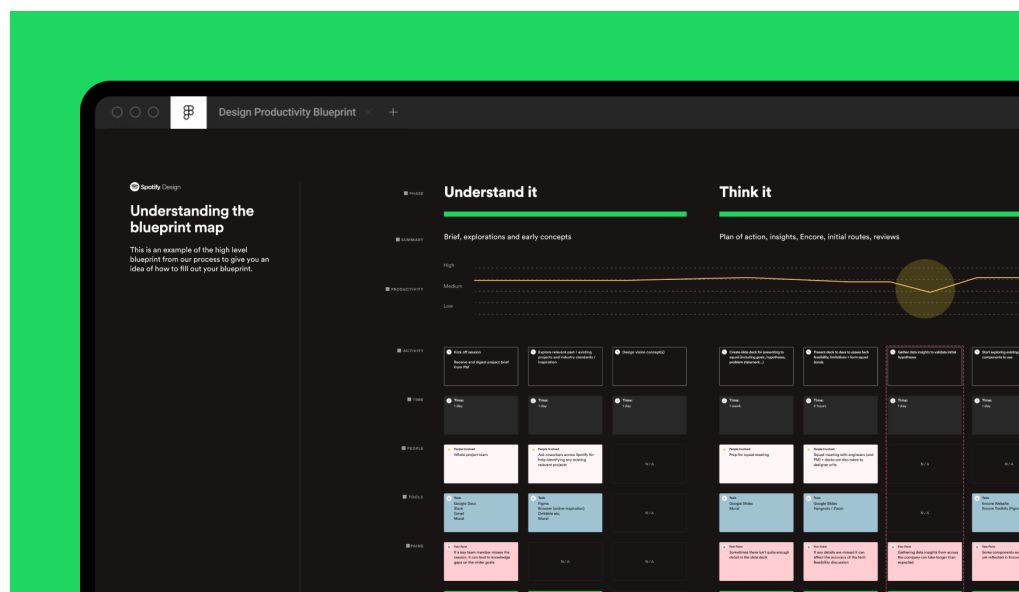
Week 8

Bringing everything together

Week 8 is the final week of the MVP definition process.

By this time we have learned enough to refine the solution prototype. We can also craft a strong business case. Recent examples of this (see case studies below) include Elsewhen building a self-service customer analytics tool, a financial management platform for SMEs, or the digital transformation and process automation of business loan applications.

Choosing whether to 'bet' time and money on digital transformation is not a straightforward task for decision-makers. The ultimate goal of the business case is to equip your organisation with enough information to make the right investment decisions – because failing to do ao can carry a high price.
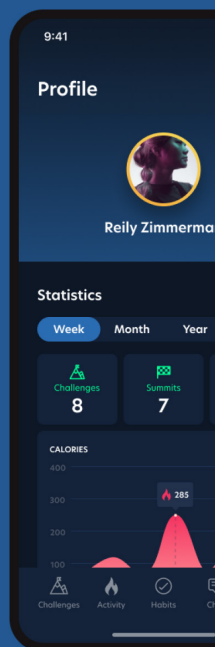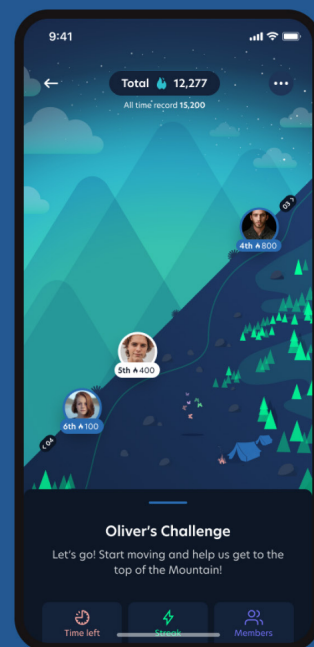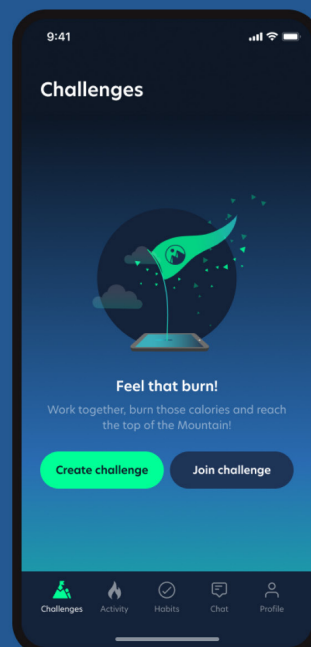
Digital product creation in action

Elsewhen has applied this process for digital transformation (e.g. discovery, definition and product development, and more) with a wide range of clients. Discover a few of our customer success
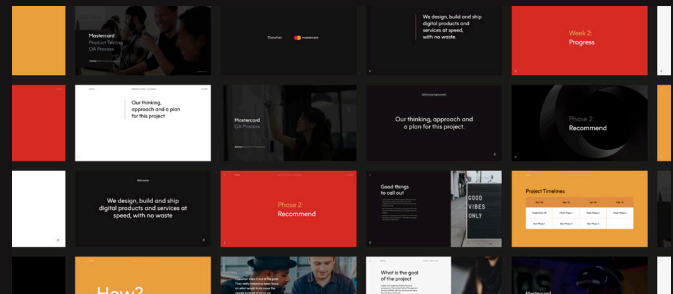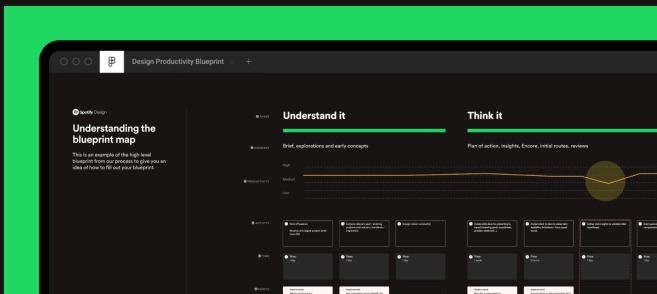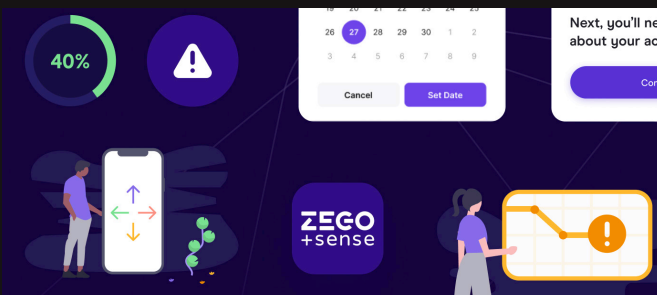

Spotify

Music streaming giant Spotify worked with Elsewhen to improve productivity in its internal business and design workflows.

→   Service Design Blueprint

Mastercard

Global payments business Mastercard worked with Elsewhen to improve quality assurance, user testing and wider digital strategy.

→   Accelerating product delivery for Mastercard

Zego

Leading insurtech Zego worked with Elsewhen to drive value with a customer-centric telematics insurance product.

→   Driving telematics insurance innovation

Bupa

Healthcare group Bupa worked with Elsewhen to bring digital transformation to its dental business, giving both patients and dentists a personalised experience.
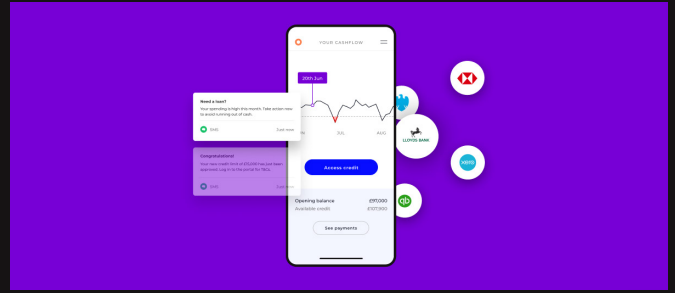
→   Leading the way in UK dental care

Capitalflow

Business lender Capitalflow made the transformation from traditional to digital operations with new tools to accelerate and automate its processes.
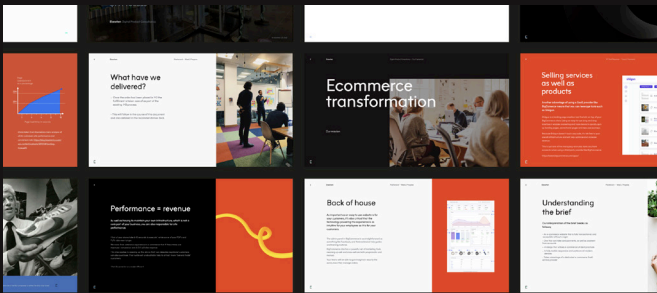
→ Transformation from traditional to digital business

SME Finance Platform

This leading private equity firm worked with Elsewhen on a new digital tool to analyse SME cash flow and provide tailored financial services.
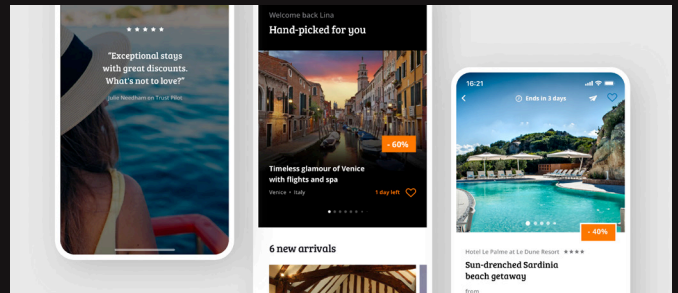
→ Creating a digital platform to transform SME finance

Selecta

Europe's leading unattended retailer worked with Elsewhen to create a digital self-service B2B2C channel.

→ Creating a digital self-service B2B2C channel

Secret Escapes

Luxury travel brand Secret Escapes worked with Elsewhen to transform its digital experience into a 'true customer conversion engine'.

→ Building a customer conversion engine

Conclusion and next steps

As we hope this guide has shown, by working with Elsewhen your business can more confidently start to accelerate digital transformation.

Our approach is to understand and answer the key related questions, based on the specific requirements of your organisation, the business case and desired outcomes.

Our digital-native consultants work on strategy, UX and tech workstreams in unison. We help you identify the opportunity – and present it visually in a business-oriented way.

Our teams define the strategy, and shape how it manifests digitally. We help you decide on the best course for the implementation – whether to build versus buy, and to understand the trade-offs and risks associated with each route.

With our expertise and support, you can bring your digital vision to life with a clear roadmap. We help you understand and address the following key issues:

- How to better address customer needs
- How to remove internal productivity blockers
- How to reduce costs by improving efficiency
- How to deal with the technology legacy
- What are the best opportunities for future growth
- Which KPIs will be improved and impact the bottom line

We're ready to help you begin your digital transformation journey – let's get started.

Who are Elsewhen?

Elsewhen have spent the past decade reimagining consulting for the digital age. We are a 40-person digital product consultancy established in 2011 and based in London. We combine strategy, design and engineering into one unified process.

We are independent and have none of the legacy technology, outdated culture, or procedural complexity that comes with being a thousand-person consultancy founded in the previous century.

We help companies tackle new market realities, pinpoint new business possibilities and surpass new customer expectations, and we lead the conversation— whether on technology, design, product or business— sharing our insights and best practices.

We work seamlessly with cutting edge organisations, or companies that aspire to be, to deliver best-in-class solutions into business-critical functions.

They understand that strategic thinking has to be deeply connected to execution experience; that achieving lasting change cannot come solely from the boardroom, but also from on-the-ground transformation.

Get in touch

Let's talk about how Elsewhen can help you accelerate your digital transformation.

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