Tata Consultancy Services' Design Thinking Program Uses Digital, ILT Learning to Bring About Change

Tata Consultancy Services

Best Use of a Blended Learning Program

October 2019

Company Background

TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Experience certainty.

Company-at-a-Glance	Tata Consultancy Services is an IT services, consulting and business solutions organization that offers a consulting-led, cognitive-powered, integrated portfolio of business, technology and engineering services and solutions. This is delivered through its unique Location Independent Agile delivery model, recognized as a benchmark of excellence in software development. A part of the Tata group, India's largest multinational business group, TCS has more than 394,000 consultants in 46 countries.
Headquarters	Mumbai, India
Year Founded	1968
Revenue	$19 billion
Employees	394,000
Global Scale	Asia Pacific, Australia & New Zealand, Europe, India, Japan, LATAM, Middle East and Africa, and North America
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	TCS functions as a full stakeholder to business, offering a consulting-led approach with an integrated portfolio of technology led solutions that encompass the entire Enterprise value chain.
Industry	IT Services and IT Consulting
Stock Symbol	BSE: 532540; NSE: TCS
Website	www.tcs.com

Budget and Timeframe

Overall budget	Conducted by internal faculty
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	12
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Seven
Start date of the program	July 2018

Business Conditions and Business Needs

TCS is one of the world's largest IT services, consulting and business solutions organization. TCS offers a consulting-led, integrated portfolio of IT, BPS, infrastructure, engineering and assurance services. TCs has 394,000-plus of the world's best-trained consultants distributed in 46 countries.

The digital five forces of Big Data and Analytics, Cloud, Mobile and Pervasive Computing, Social Media, and Artificial Intelligence and Robotics are transforming organizations, employees and customers. TCS's global study on the state of digital initiatives in large companies in North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America found significant variations in digital investments and business impact. The dramatic scale and pace of change are impacting industry leadership and blurring boundaries across industries resulting in companies re-strategizing and reimagining their businesses in multiple dimensions.

A TCS global research study — based on a survey of 1,231 senior executives across industries — shows that firms are using technology as a foundation for four critical business behaviors that will help them move to the next level:

1. **Driving Mass Personalization** — Personalizing products and services to a market of one customer, often even of one transaction, and at scale

2. **Creating Exponential Value** — Adopting business models that leverage value from transactions at multiple levels and address new markets

3. **Leveraging Ecosystems** — Collaborating with partners inside and outside the supply chain to create new products and services

4. **Embracing Risk** — Moving beyond rigid planning and operational barriers with an Agile strategic approach

Business Need

In this disruptive scenario, business requirements become dynamic in nature. Associates need to be trained to understand the changing business needs and the requirements of the end customer. This required a paradigm shift from the earlier approach of process and project effectiveness. The Design Thinking approach — with a focus on the source of these changes — the end user was the best suited to deliver on Business 4.0.

This user-centric approach focuses on empathizing with the user to understand their pains and gains, thereby identifying the parameters which affect them and encouraging ideation on how to optimize them.

Design Thinking approach can be applied in any situation/domain/industry/scenario by identifying the relevant problem statement and hence has immense scope.

Overview

The Design Thinking course is for associates who are trying to solve complex problems and develop products and experiences that are more user-centered. It is useful for people who are attempting to bring about a change or innovation in the way the organization/project team approaches a problem. Design Thinking is a user-centered way of problem-solving in which the needs and wants of the user are given priority.

The Design Thinking workshop is designed as a blended-learning program being deployed as a combination of self-paced learning content/digital mode of engagement followed by a two-day ILT workshop. Learners are provided E0 (Exposure) level of content in self-paced mode, followed by debriefing calls, and then they assemble to apply these concepts through activities in the workshop. The major focus is on learning by doing.

This workshop is open for participation for all employees with the necessary prerequisites to be completed once they register for the program. A diverse audience mix is encouraged to induce ideation.

Design of the Program

Objective

1. In first phase, the aim was to create awareness about Design Thinking concepts
2. The second phase aims at creating Design Thinking practitioners

Self-Paced Mode

The training begins with a bit of self-paced learning to get the learners acquainted with the basic concepts of Design Thinking. The WBT briefly covers the five stages of design thinking, along with some Design Thinking case studies popular across different

industries. This way, the learners get acquainted with the basics and that makes it convenient for the workshop to be used more effectively for the immersion exercises. The associates are awarded with an E0 competency after successfully completing this phase. This is also pegged as a pre-requisite for the workshop.

vILT

In each workshop, the participants are presented with two to three themes/problems statements. Participants are divided into diverse groups and each group needs to choose a theme/problem statement democratically. Following that, they are taught on how to map different stakeholders (users to interview) and interview them based on their respective themes. Debriefing and handholding are done through calls and WebEx.

ILT

Learners gather for the workshop armed with their interview notes. They now undergo a series of exercises applying Design Thinking concepts to draw inferences from the user inputs against their problem statement. They work in groups to ideate, discuss, debate and arrive at a probable idea to address the problem and present a prototype by the end of the workshop. The associates are awarded with an E1 (Experience) competency on successfully completing this phase.

The following are some of the themes explored during the course of these workshops:

- Leveraging TCS Ecosystem to meet associates' career aspirations
- Work-life Balance
- Exponential growth in revenue
- Exponential growth in profit margin
- From order takers to consultants in the time of Business 4.0
- How to smart source a project: right resource at the right time
- Learning: Of the people, for the people, by the people

The following topics are discussed and debated during the course of the ILT phase:

- Mindfulness
- Relevance of Design Thinking in the time of Business 4.0
- Five stages of Design Thinking: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test

The following are some of the bonus modules/allied concepts that help reinforce the knowledge:

- Value Proposition

- Service Design

- Cognitive Flexibility

TCS achieved the first objective by grooming 1453 associates in 43 batches, and the workshop has attracted participation from 92 business units across 28 branches. Participants ranged across 26 designations, from Management Trainee to Principal Consultant (from junior most to senior most)

TCS's focus is now on creating more practitioners. For this, TCS is identifying learners facing similar business challenges. They will be subjected to these three steps to disrupt the status quo and ideate from a clients' perspective. To ensure they get enough time to reflect and deliberate on their ideas, the final presentation is due in four weeks.

With this modified approach, TCS hopes to provide learners more time to test their prototypes by employing the Fail Fast principle and arrive at Minimum Viable Products.

Delivery of the Program

Broadcasts

The program launch was broadcast and nominations accepted from interested associates.

Figure 1: Design Thinking Program Launch

All illustrations provided by Tata Consultancy Services

Figure 2: Program Construct

Batch Planning

Based on demand, batches are planned in conjunction with the regional TD teams. In FY19, batches were conducted at 11 major TCS locations.

Inviting Nominations

Monthly calendars were published and associates were encouraged to join the suitable batch by nominating through iEvolve, TCS's internal LMS. Information was also cascaded through Business Unit TD teams.

Pre-engagement

- **Step 1 — E0 Self-Paced Course**: First step for learners is to go-through the E0 self-learning content where they get acquainted with the DT terminology.

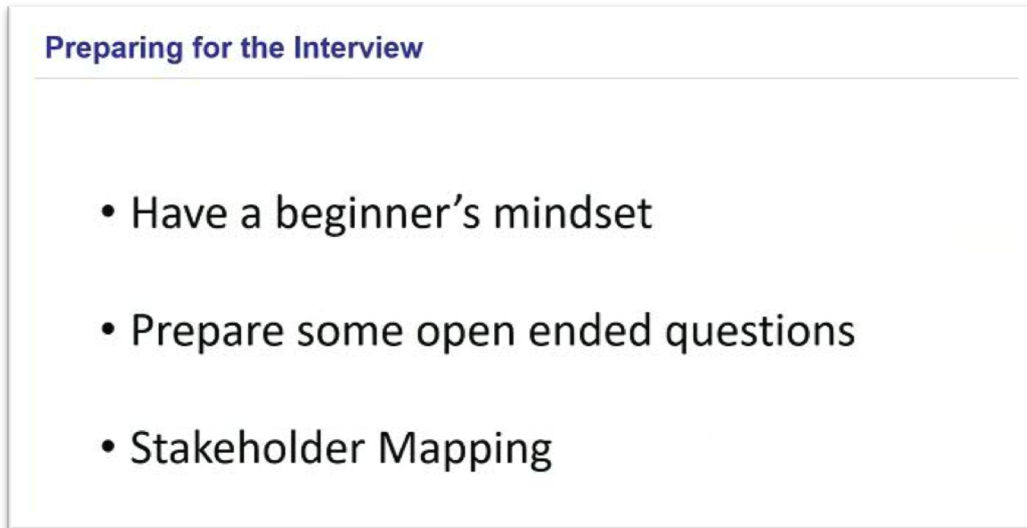**Figure 3: Snapshot from the Self-Paced Course**
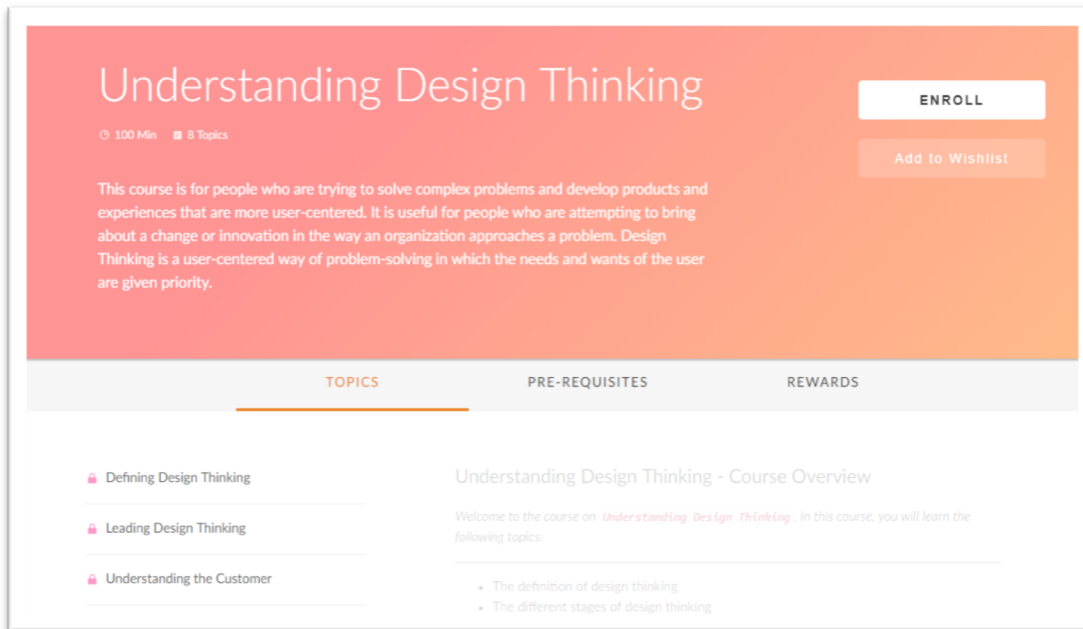
- **Step 2 — Sharing of Themes:** They are shared a choice of themes to pick and interpret to identify their target audience.

- **Step 3 — vILT Mode:** At the start, all the nominated participants are divided into groups. The groups are diverse with participants having different roles across experience range. They are asked to pick from provided problem statements/themes, identify target audience as per their interpretation of the theme and get user inputs using interview method. Participants are already familiar with DT terminology, having gone through the self-paced content. To supplement their understanding and set the context, calls are scheduled. This phase lasts for almost two to three weeks. In this duration, a minimum of two connects happen.

Some sample themes are:

- Exponential Increase in Revenue and Growth of Account

- Exponential Growth of Margin (Profitability in the account)

- From order takers to consultants in the time of Business 4.

- How to smart source a project: Right resource at the Right time

Follow-up on progress is taken over calls, and queries addressed. The following is a slide used during the debriefing call.
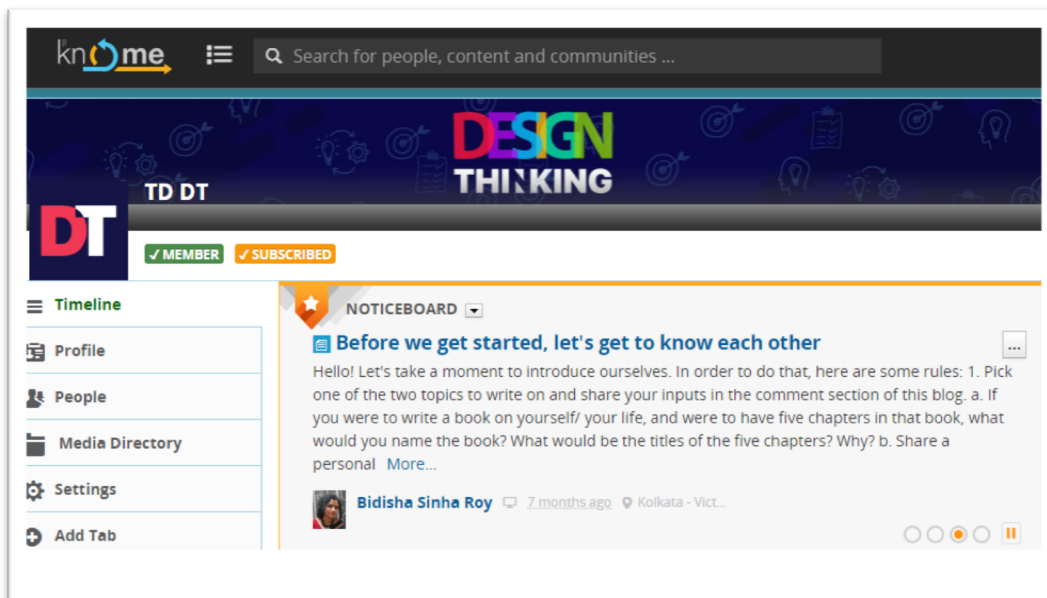
Figure 4: Preparing for the Interview

During this period, participants are also encouraged to engage with their peers and have discussions over Knome, the TCS internal collaboration portal.

Figure 5: TCS Internal Collaboration Portal

Workshop

Associates attend the workshop, equipped with their interview notes, inferences and a lot of enthusiasm. The workshop starts with a Mindfulness session to help participants leave other thoughts behind and focus. They are taken through concepts on Empathize, Define, Cognitive Flexibility through various activities. There are also Immersion and Ideation sessions.

Figure 6: Design Thinkers at Work

Figure 7: Sample User Persona and PoVs Created During the Workshop
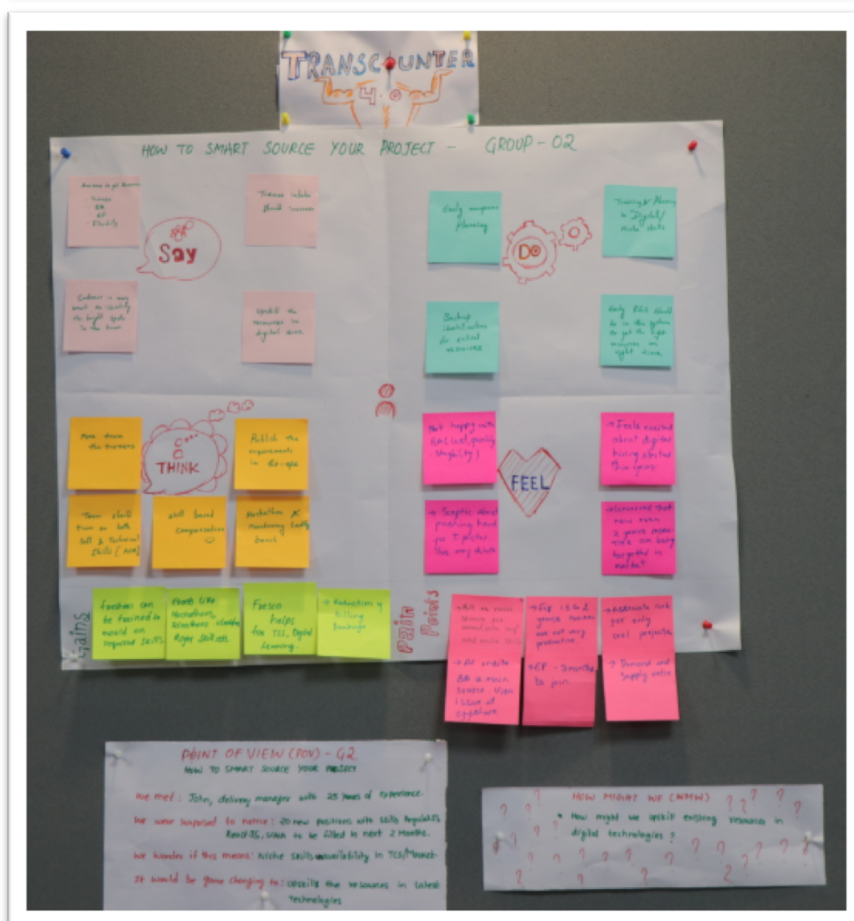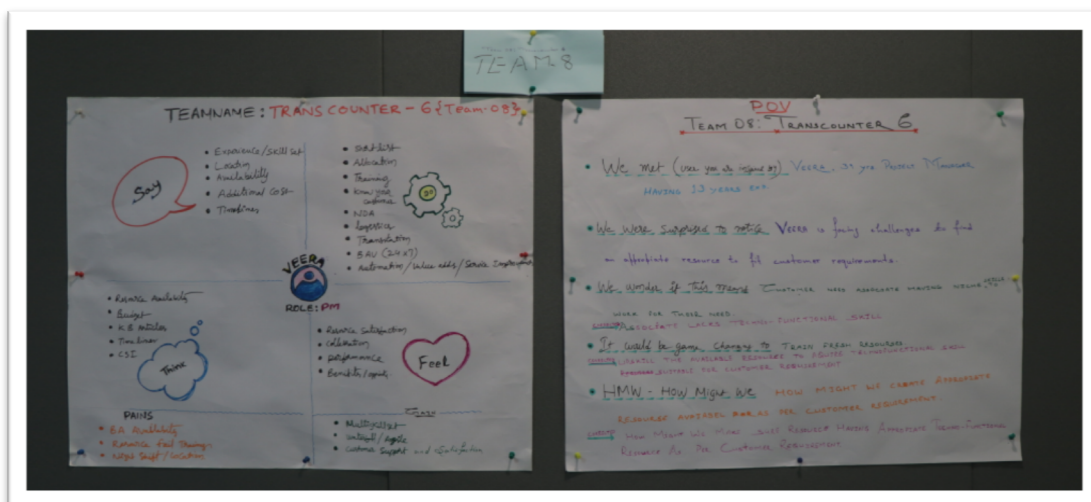
On the second day, learners are acquainted with the value proposition, pitch and preparation followed by developing prototypes and testing them.

Figure 8: Prototype Created by a Group

This is followed by a final presentation where they share the complete story starting from their user personas, empathy maps, pain-and-gain chart and "how might we" statements to the ideas behind arriving at their prototypes.

During the presentation, along with the faculties, they were also evaluated by their peers in the Peer Evaluation Framework — a TCS Internal Portal created especially for this workshop.
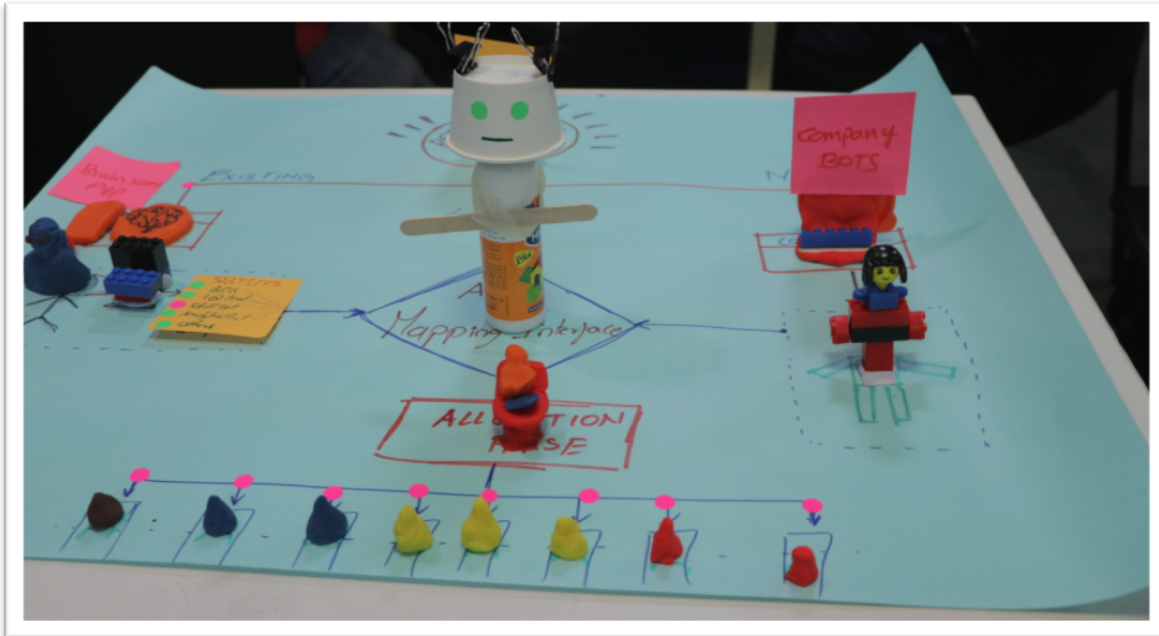
Considering both the inputs, a composite score was auto-calculated for each group and published.

Figure 9: A Sample Snapshot of Peer Review Scores

Team Name	Expert Score	Peer Score	Team Score
Kol_Team2	53.33	28.00	81.33
Kol_Team7	50.00	27.41	77.41
Kol_Team6	48.33	25.93	74.26
Kol_Team3	45.00	27.78	72.78
Kol_Team5	43.33	28.15	71.48
Kol_Team1	43.33	27.78	71.11

Post-workshop Engagement

Once learners return to their regular tasks, they are encouraged to continue working on their workshop project to further refine the prototype. They are also given an opportunity to choose a new problem area from their work sphere and apply DT concepts to approach a solution.

Faculty guidance is provided with periodic reviews and discussion sessions.

Figure 11: DT Workshop at Hyderabad

Change Management Efforts

Design Thinking 101: E0 Self-Paced Learning Content

During initial workshops, it was observed that learners took time to grasp the DT terminology and basic concepts. Often, they would confuse it with the Design tools being used in various domains. As a result, a course with basic definitions, terminologies and a lot of DT case studies was curated and deployed in iEvolve, TCS's LMS, for consumption of all interested.

This course also helped in addressing the curiosity of learners and equipped them to swing into action mode during the workshop. This pre-workshop learning helped in further making the workshop crisp and activity oriented

Workshop Duration Modified from Three Days to Two Days

With the three-day format, two major challenges were being faced:

1. Availability of participants for three full days. Being on projects, it was posing as a hindrance. Drop-outs were also being observed.

2. Cost involved with logistics and arrangements

To tackle these problems, but also keeping the tempo and pace of the workshop intact, below steps were taken:

1. **E0 Self-Paced WBT Course** was enabled in iEvolve

2. **vILT Mode — Debriefing calls**: Through the first debriefing call, they were acquainted with the problem statement and initiated on their interviews. The second call is used to address their queries and track their progress.

Equipped with the basic concepts and pre-workshop interview-based assignment notes, learners were ready to delve into activities right away on Day 1 of the workshop.

This led to a boost in participation, as well as a reduction in cost.

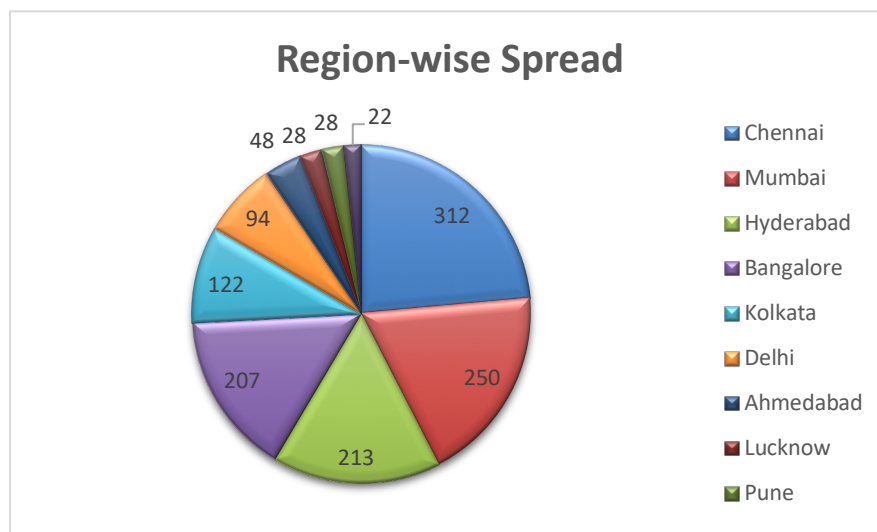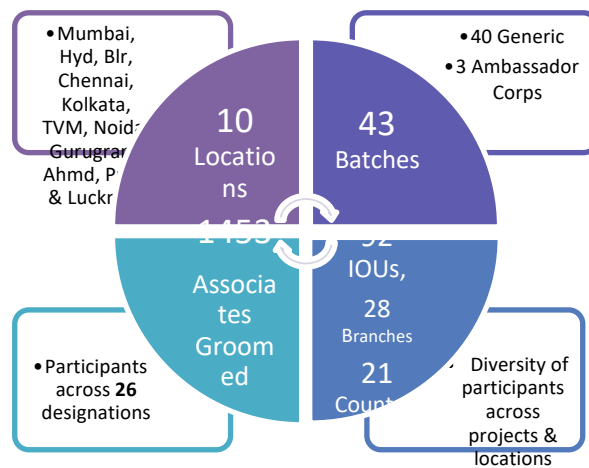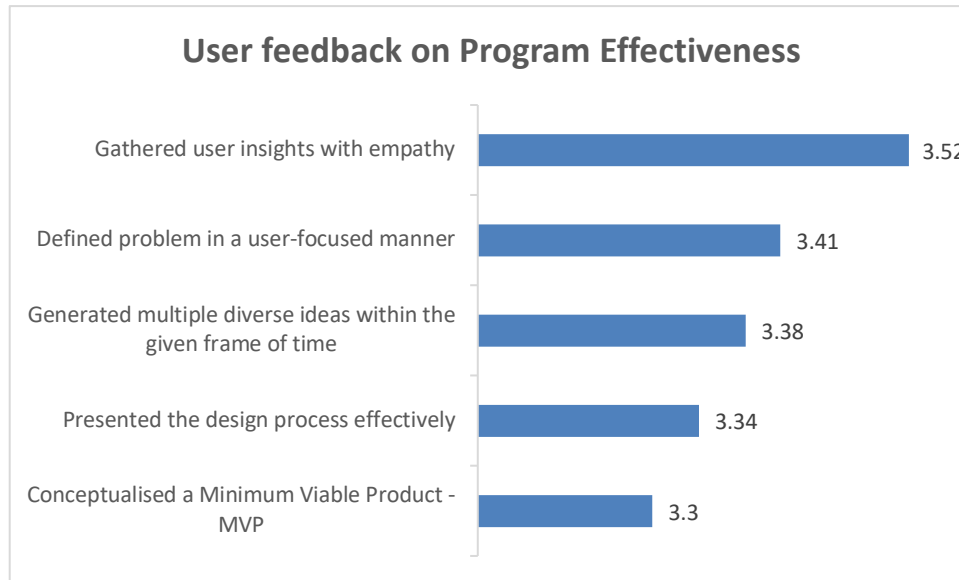## Measurable Benefits

Figure 11: Scale

Figure 12: User Feedback on Program Effectiveness

User feedback on Program Effectiveness

Gathered user insights with empathy	3.52
Defined problem in a user-focused manner	3.41
Generated multiple diverse ideas within the given frame of time	3.38
Presented the design process effectively	3.34
Conceptualised a Minimum Viable Product - MVP	3.3

*Rating/4

Learner Testimonies

- *"Thought Provoking Training"*

- *"We have used Design thinking 'Empathy' tool for highlighting challenges in our Project Landscape which was appreciated by Client as well as senior management."*

- *"Excellent learning experience. Used for my paper which won the Best Case Study Award at India's biggest gathering of Designers-India HCI 2018."*

- *"The Design Thinking Workshop has been immensely beneficial for me. I have started using the concepts in my projects and beyond as well."*

- *"Something new which leads you to think in a broader way."*

A WIP Design Thinking Project: Started January 2019

- **Theme**: Re-imagining the Role of Recruiter with Social Media

Global Sourcing Group

A Central group for handling recruitment needs for all foreign geographies, with major concentration in US and LATAM is adopting Design Thinking approach to improve the following metrics from FY18-19 to FY19-20.

Social Media Targets

- An increase on 100% in the offer count through social media

- Joining ratio through LinkedIn to reach the India industry average

- 30% Increase in offers through BringYourBuddy platform

- Reducing number of offers through vendor from 23% to 18%

Centralized Leadership Hiring Targets

- A 50% increase in offer roll-out for leadership positions

- Shift of ownership from regional teams to a central team

- Increase in joining ratio from 75% (connects and mail communication) to 78%)using chatbot for mass personalization)

- Shift from region-wise hiring projection and planning to business-unit wise planning

Figure 13: Mind Mapping – Social Media

The outcome is being measured on TCS Careers Page using Google Analytics against the following metrics:

- Traffic reporting (through Facebook, Google Search and LinkedIn)

- Average time spent by user

- Conversion Tracking — Login to Applying for a Job

- Impact story — Before versus after the campaign

Figure 14: Centralized Sourcing and Selection
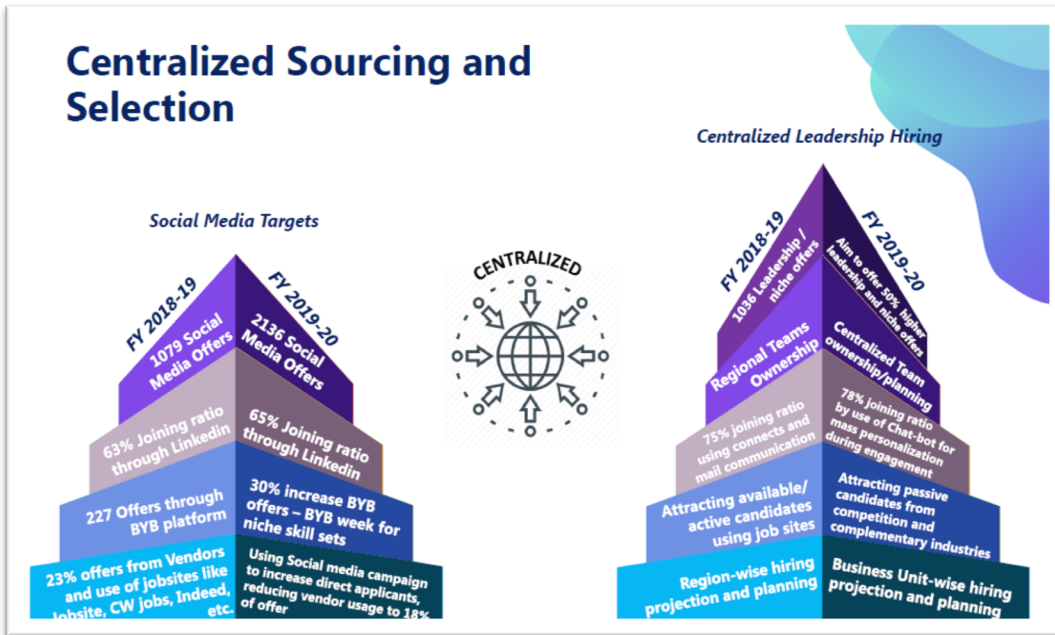
Overall

Design Thinking Program has provided an opportunity to associates to modify their approach toward their problem areas — in a professional as well as personal sphere.

Lessons learned

- **Activity-based Learning is the Key:** One of TCS's key learnings has been that associates, no matter in which age group they fall, prefer activity based learning and understand concepts better when they are tagged to simplified insightful fun filled exercises. Keeping this in mind, apart from the focused theme-based innovative problem solving immersions, the workshop initiates each session with free flowing habit-breaking activities. These lateral thinking, storytelling, visual thinking and ideating exercises don't necessarily focus on work related themes. Instead, they take associates out of their comfort zones and place them in situations that deconstruct their assumptions and question their premises. It has been noticed that these activities in the tactile classroom mode has set the context and the tempo for the subsequent out-of-box prototyping and solutions for real life problems. So, as TCS moves to the practitioner level of the training program, the classroom remains an integral part for the initial two days.

- **Keeping Learners Engaged:** Even after the exhilarating experience in the workshop, when left on their own, some associates get back to the business-as-

usual mode post workshop and do not go and implement the learning at work, in their on-the-job scenarios. So, instead of allowing the participants to go completely their way after the classroom sessions, the plan is to keep a virtual blended engagement going for the next one month. For this, TCS starts engagement four weeks before the workshop. Post-workshop, TCS continues interacting through Knome by posting interesting case studies and information snippets to keep the discussions going.

- **Standardized Delivery:** ILT mode brings in different teaching styles. This poses of risk of missing out of certain details or examples in some batches. As a result, the material used in this workshop is standardized across locations and batches to ensure consistency in learner experience.

- **Relevance of Problem Statement:** It is imperative that participants relate to the problem statements — scenarios which they face frequently and are in need of attention. TCS has been modifying the problem statements through the journey in FY19, as per the participant profile. In FY20, the focus is on account specific audience who defines their own problem statements.

Future Outlook

- **Continuous Learner Engagement —** A virtual post-workshop constructivist approach is being planned. Under this learners, along with the facilitators, harvest more and more organization-specific case studies from practitioners, take cues from these stories, build on them and create more such application instances. Discussions, debates on these case studies and problems will continue through Knome, TCS internal social learning platform. This will also include encouraging participants to get into Living Agile sessions where they come up with rapid prototypes in a day or two for business problems within their chosen teams and get buy-in from their unit heads to implement in real-life client projects. Along with tangible hard copy artifacts and documents, in the future TCS is also looking to leverage virtual collaborative platforms using which associates can ideate and pursue design thinking's projects sitting in different corners of the globe.

- **Grooming more Design Thinking Practitioners —** Design Thinking is now a popular and established training program in TCS.

TCS's focus now is to create impact stories and encourage more learners to pursue Design Thinking projects.

- Employing DT in addressing Business problems in a time-boxed manner (four- to six-week projects)

About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is an HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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