

Reliable Magic

design thinking + doing process



Designers collaborate with clients and colleagues to develop values-driven, user-centric planning solutions.



A rigorous “reliable magic” design process is required to deliver transformative projects within deadlines and budgets.



Reliable magic
works with
human nature,
rather than
attempting to
overcome it.



A tight-loose process defines boundaries while encouraging participants to explore what if...? opportunities.



Here are ten reliable magic practices from the design studio that can be applied to any complex challenge.

1.

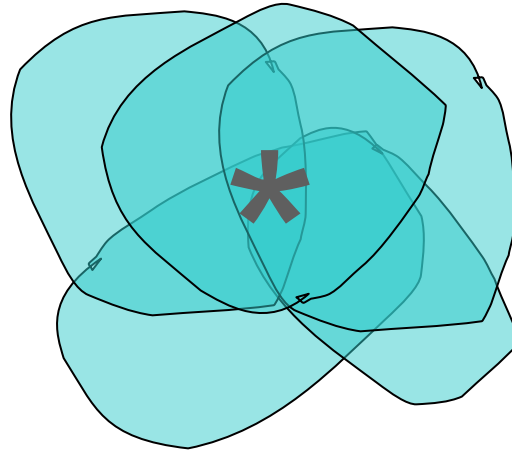
Design with (not for) your constituents.

Engage in dialogue aimed at building deep-seated understanding so that people “believe in” rather than “buy in” the emerging way forward.





2.



Identify shared values and interests.

It's not necessary for people to agree on all aspects of the project. Instead, jointly define points of common interest and shared values.

3.

Re-frame the question.

Most initial project definitions aim too low and present falsely limiting either/or choices.



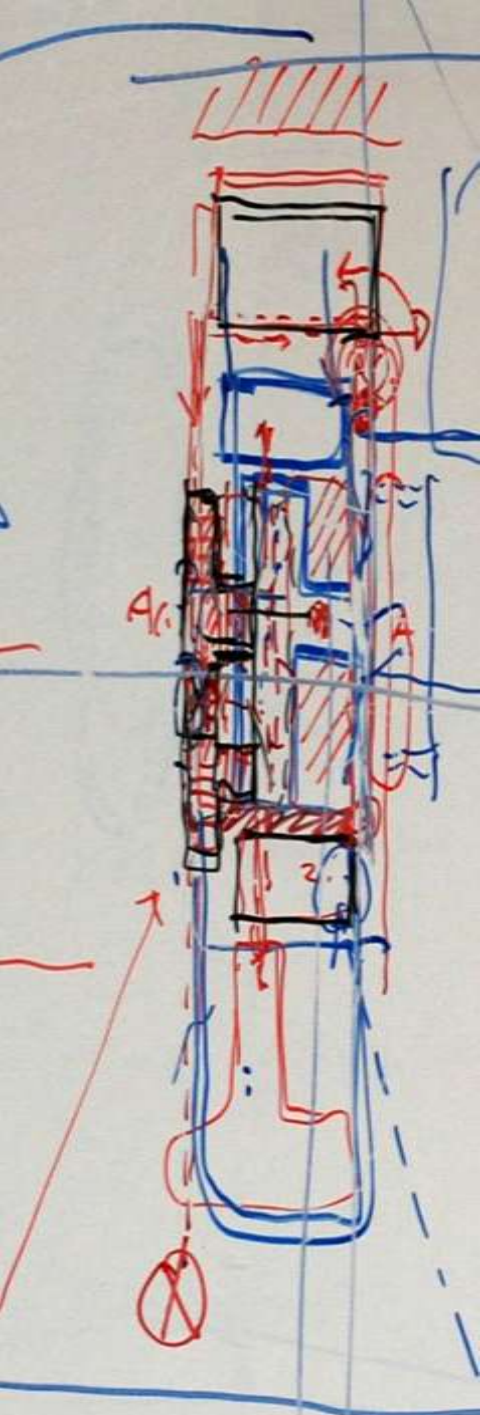
4.

Don't jump to the end of the story.

Jumping to conclusions and short-circuiting a shared learning curve leads to weak answers and shaky support.



5.



Invite divergent thinking.

Avoid self-limiting choices between existing options by exploring fast, cheap iterations in a fluid learn/adjust/repeat process.

6.

Learn to appreciate uncertainty.

Allow ideas to emerge in a natural process of dialogue and inquiry, rather than defend pre-conceived solutions.



7.



Ask: what else can we see here?

Rather than re-arrange existing pieces of a puzzle, look beyond obvious, linear solutions to see patterns, variations and combinations.

8.

Don't get too attached, too soon.

Avoid emotional attachments to early ideas—especially ones that are developed while working alone. Instead, set these ideas free to evolve through a process of dialogue and inquiry.



9.

Expect some resistance.

It is a given that new ideas will be adopted at different rates by different people. Aim to work *through* natural resistance with dialogue and inquiry rather than attempt to *overcome* it.



10.

Adopting ideas is a process, not an event.

The digestion process for new ideas can be seen as similar to digesting food: it's better to create an appetite for bite-sized pieces than force-feed in quantity.



A STRATEGIC DESIGN PROCESS FOR
Reliable Magic

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