

Design Atlas results sheet

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<i>General planning awareness</i> How effective is the business at planning across all its activities?				
<i>General planning communication</i> Are plans and objectives communicated clearly to all relevant company staff?				
<i>Design planning awareness</i> Does the business understand where design fits within its overall corporate plans?				
<i>Design planning thinking</i> What use is made of structured thinking in developing design plans?				
<i>Design planning horizons</i> How focused and forward thinking are design plans				
<i>General process awareness</i> Is their understanding of how activities can be identified as processes?				
<i>Design process awareness</i> Does the business understand where design fits within its processes?				
<i>Design process management</i> Does the business understand how design activity can be managed?				
<i>Design process tools</i> What use is made of structured thinking in design activity?				
<i>General resource allocation</i> Does the business understand the general principles of budget allocation				
<i>Design resource allocation</i> Is the business able to assign resources to design activity?				
<i>Design skills</i> Does the business have the skills to handle design activity				
<i>Design organisation</i> Does the business accommodate the multi-disciplinary nature of design activity?				
<i>Design commitment</i> How committed are senior management to design activity?				
<i>Design attitudes</i> How positive are attitudes to design?				

Part 3 – Responding to findings

In Part 1 of this guide the process for using the Design Atlas framework within an organisation is outlined. In Part 2 of the guide the Design Atlas questions are detailed.

This final part of the guide describes recommendations for design capability development that can be made in response to the Design Atlas findings. These are presented in a tabular form.

Responding to Design Atlas findings – Planning for design

General planning awareness

If general planning awareness is low within a business the overall business plan should be developed before attention is paid to design planning. This might require training in the preparation of business plans or assistance from an external advisor. Even when business planning awareness is high there will always be room for improvement, for example making the process more dynamic, improving methods used for analysing internal and external factors. Again training or external advice will often be helpful in bringing this expertise into the business

General planning communication

Communication is central to effective implementation of all plans. If this area is low scoring effort must be put into improving communication. This might be achieved by examining the way information flows through the organisation and then changing the style of management or altering the frequency and participation at meetings. Investment in the design of working environments and internal communication routes, such as the intranet, will all potentially improve general planning communication.

Design planning awareness

Many businesses have not realised the role design can play in delivering business objectives. If awareness in this area is low a business can benefit from being shown appropriate examples of how design could help deliver business objectives. Useful case studies demonstrating the impact of design investment are available on the Design Council website.
www.designcouncil.org.uk

Design planning thinking

It can be difficult to organise and discuss design plans unless some form of structured thinking is being used within the business. There are many tools and techniques that can be implemented to raise capability in this area. Some of these are described in chapter 11 of the Design in Business book associated with this website. These could be introduced as part of planning procedures within the company. Alternatively the company might choose to work with external consultants offering design-planning expertise.

Design planning horizons

In order to improve an organisation's design planning horizons new ways of working need to be introduced to the planning team. Again some of the tools described in the Design in Business textbook chapter 11 could be accessed and implemented within the business.

Responding to Design Atlas findings – Processes for design

General process awareness

If general business awareness is low it will be very unlikely that the business will understand processes such as design. Time might be well spent establishing fundamental processes within the business such as purchasing or order processing before examining the design process. Advice can be sought from external advisors on how to establish these processes. The internal team could be trained to identify, record and improve business processes; alternatively external consultants can be used to guide the activity within an organisation.

Design process awareness

If a business wants to improve its capability in the area of design process it needs to understand what its existing design process looks like and how it might be improved. Bringing the design team together to map the process used in existing or past projects is an excellent way of starting this. The design process mapping methodology referenced in Chapter 11 of the Design in Business describes how to do this. Whenever the business completes a design project it is important that the design team reflect on the problems and successes associated with the design process. In this way opportunities for process improvement can be identified on a continuous basis.

Design process management

In order to rectify a low score for design process management a business needs to implement some form of design project planning and review. Appropriate software could be introduced to the organisation for planning and tracking the progress of design projects. In addition the business could introduce more systematic review meetings into future projects.

Design process tools

There are many techniques that will enhance thinking during design activity. It can be difficult to introduce these effectively and raise the capability in this area unless there is an established design process within the business. In the Book Design in Business a variety of these tools are either described or referenced. Individuals from the business could attend training courses in the use of these tools. Alternatively learning could be experiential through direct application on a live project.

Responding to Design Atlas findings – Resources, People and culture for design

General resource allocation

If a business is poor at assigning resources to any form of project activity it is unlikely that it will be in a position to support design investment effectively. Advice should be given to the business about business planning and resource allocation in a general sense before money is spent on design. This can be achieved through engaging external advice or by training of staff.

Design resource allocation

Businesses can be poor at assigning resources to design activity when the impact of that investment is unclear. It can be useful to explain to a business both the short term and long term benefits that might accrue from design investment in both tangible and intangible terms. The Design in Business textbook contains a chapter providing advice on design investment decisions.

Design skills

If the business has no access to suitable design expertise consideration needs to be given to in-house development of expertise or partnership with external design agencies. Information on local design agencies should be available from regional business support agencies such as Business Links, Scottish Enterprise, the Northern Ireland Design Directorate and Welsh Design

Design organisation

The business may have limited experience of team working. Establishing the design process being used within the organisation can be a very useful start point in identifying ways to improve the organisation of design projects.

Design commitment

A low commitment to design activity from senior staff should ring alarm bells. Priority should be given to establishing this commitment; this might be achieved by presenting information given in the tools section of the Design Council website. Success will usually help build commitment undertaking a well thought through pilot design project, can often be useful

Design attitudes

Staff attitudes can only be influenced over a period of time. Discussion and debate can be very effective ways of developing a positive approach towards design. Getting staff involved in the design process and implementation of ideas will also benefit attitudes towards design

