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Report on the BDT Strategy Jam

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Report of the BDT Strategy Jam
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INTRODUCTION

Part of the endorsed BDT Innovation Strategy is to undertake what we refer to as **Innovation Challenges**. The objective of these Innovation Challenges is to gather a multi-disciplinary expert team and consider a specific ITU product, service or activity to propose improvements. In the most recent "BDT Strategy Jam", held on 30 August 2013, we considered the theme **"How might we change the value proposition of BDT and make it more relevant and impactful?"**. This document is a draft report of that one-day event involving BDT professional staff.

An objective of our Innovation Challenges is to create a safe space where new ideas can emerge and be explored outside of traditional structural and organizational boundaries. With this challenges objective, as for previous ITU Innovation Challenges, we used *design thinking* methods that the BDT's Innovation Division has refined over time through experience. A key objective is that participants feel they are part of an interactive day of ideation, brainstorming, collaboration and co-creation that results in a positive impact. It should be emphasized that ideas should lead to practical outcomes through implementation. Indeed, if participants feel that their efforts and ideas are not recognized, considered and, where appropriate, implemented, they are less likely to be willing to contribute to future challenges.

THE METHODOLOGY

In the opening session, the BDT Director welcomed the participants and made opening remarks on the importance of staff involvement in the development of a new strategic vision for the ITU-D and, in particular, solicited their ideas on how we might improve the BDT to better serve the ITU's membership. He also welcomed the remote participants from the ITU's Regional Offices.

The facilitator then gave an overview on the *design thinking* methodologies that would be used starting with day's *design brief*:

"How might we change the value proposition of BDT and make it more relevant and impactful?"
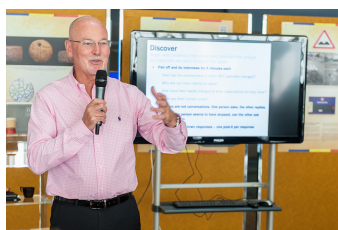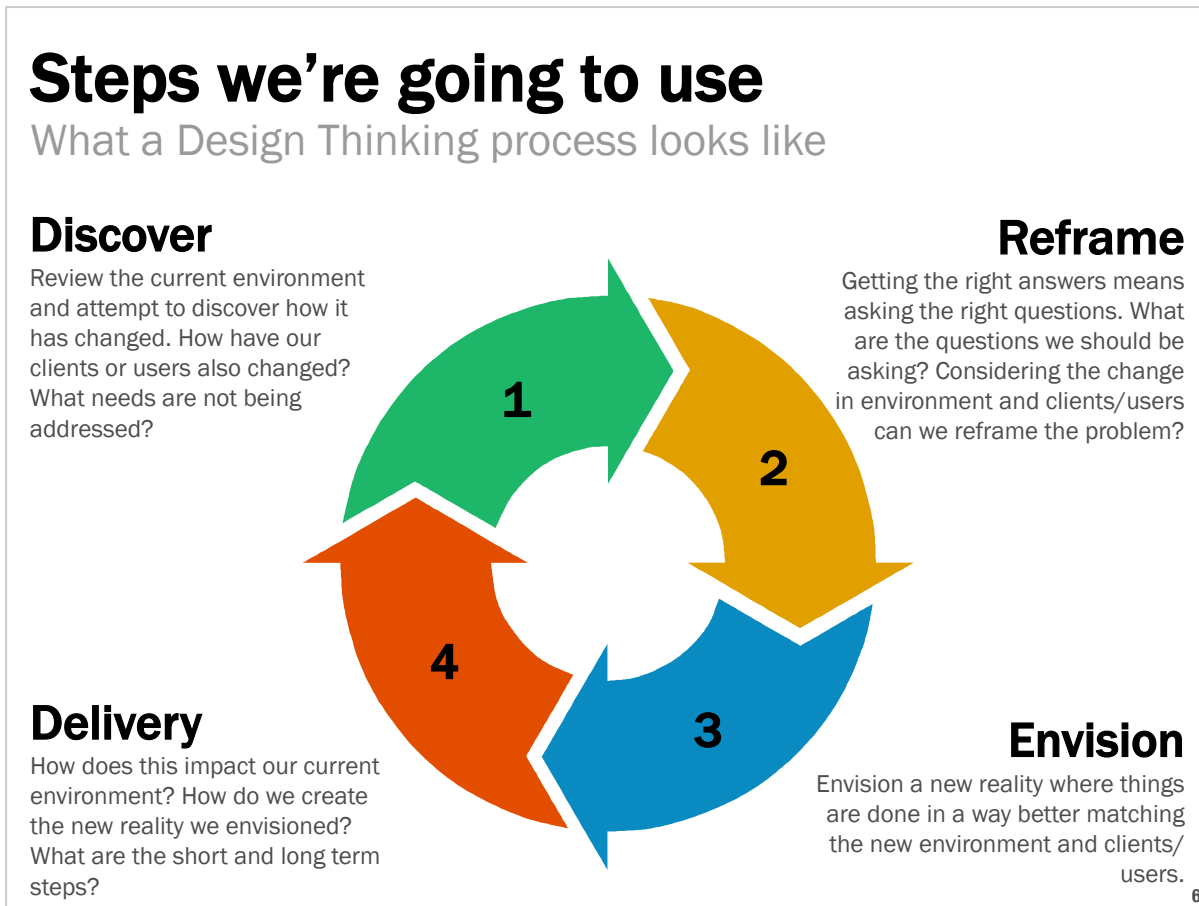
The facilitator explained that one of the principles of design thinking is recognition that problems and solutions co-evolve together. That's why a design thinking process is by its nature both cyclic (see Figure 1 below) and involves ongoing refinement through feedback and building of prototypes of the envisioned solution. He explained that this is because building an approximation of what you think might be the solution to a problem, however 'rough', often drives deeper and valuable insights into the nature of the problem. He paraphrased this as "*building a prototype helps you understand what you didn't understand about the problem".*

To explore the design brief, the facilitator described the steps shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Design Thinking Method Steps

Steps we're going to use
What a Design Thinking process looks like

Discover
Review the current environment and attempt to discover how it has changed. How have our clients or users also changed? What needs are not being addressed?

Reframe
Getting the right answers means asking the right questions. What are the questions we should be asking? Considering the change in environment and clients/users can we reframe the problem?

Delivery
How does this impact our current environment? How do we create the new reality we envisioned? What are the short and long term steps?

Envision
Envision a new reality where things are done in a way better matching the new environment and clients/users.

An overview how these four steps were carried out is given below.

Discover

The Discover step reviews the current environment and attempts to discover how it has changed and what needs are not being met. For example, how have our clients or users changed? What unmet needs are not being addressed?

To begin this exercise, the participants gathered into groups of approximately 4-6 people around a table and we began with conversations between two people on the nature of the design brief and a set of more specific questions given below. We do this through bilateral interviews thereby gaining insights into the different perspectives of each participant.

The interviews were for 5 minutes each on the following questions:

- How has the environment in which BDT operates changed?
- Who are our main clients or users?
- How have their needs changed and what new expectations do they have?

- What are their unmet needs?

The interviews are not conversations. One person asks, the other replies. Only when the respondent seems to have stopped, can the other ask another question. Each interviewers write down responses on post-its with one post-it per response.

- Responses were gathered on post-its and then shared at each table
- After considering the gathered responses, each group was asked to decide on a more specific topic area that they wanted to tackle
- Each group was asked to give itself a name (like the 'BDT Game Changers')
- A representative of each group was then asked to share amongst all the participants the topic area they were going to tackle
- The participants were then informed they could change their group if they heard another group or table more aligned with their personal interests

Reframe

Getting the right answers means asking the right questions. What are the questions we should be asking? Considering the change in environment and clients/users can we reframe the problem?

- In this step, each participant was asked to brainstorm in silence on the topic chosen by each group. They were asked to come up with 5-10 questions each in the format 'how might we….' and write one question per post-it
- Each group was then asked to put all their post-its on a group wall and then attempt to cluster their questions by theme. The participants were then asked to examine the clustered questions and narrow down to the most interesting questions by using 3 votes each to vote on their favorites.
- Each groups was then asked to vote again until they had a single question that they would like to develop a prototype solution

Envision

In this step, the participants were asked to envision a new reality where things are done in a way better matching the new environment and clients/users.

- Each group was asked to build a prototype of their solution to their best question (30 minutes) using MindMaps, diagrams, Lego, etc.
- Each group was then asked to choose another group to pitch your question and solution to it and get peer feedback from the group on their solution
- Each group was then asked to return to refine their prototype again

Deliver

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How does this impact our current environment? How do we create the new reality we envisioned? What are the short and long term steps?

In this step, each group was asked to present/pitch to the whole group their prototype taking into consideration the following considerations:

- How does this impact our current environment?
- How do we create the new reality we envisioned?
- What are the short and long-term steps?

Groups Established

Seven groups were established. These were the:

- Experts
- MMN
- Innovators
- Terminators
- BDT Builders
- Remain Relevant/Walk the Talk
- Transformers

Figure 2: BDT Strategy Jam Groups

AN ATTEMPTED SYNTHESIS OF THE IDENTIFIED ISSUES

It was clear from the feedback from the participants that the ITU-D structure, processes and outputs need to be adapted to become more responsive to a fast-moving information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

Recurrent Messages

A number of common themes emerged from the discussions and prototypes developed by the participants and demonstrated a convergence and commonality of views amongst participating staff (see Figure 3). Some of the *key messages* that emerged included:

- Focus on our competitive advantages such as data collection, analysis and staff expertise
- Increase our relevance
- Improve feedback mechanisms using site visits, questionnaires and surveys
- Develop and sell models and toolkits
- Involve partners and stakeholders
- Raise visibility of BDT
- Repackage what we already have and use this to attract new partners
- Better exploit our knowledge pool
- Be heard (need for better marketing)

Figure 3: BDT Strategy Jam Key Messages

More specifically, the seven groups decided to tackle the following sets of questions (see Figure 4):

- How do we become experts?
- How do we evaluate the impact of our work?
- How do we remain true to our mandate?
- How do we reframe and formulate our value proposition?
- How do we structure our knowledge centre?
- How do we create big partnerships?

- How can we be seen as key players/partners for development?

Figure 4: BDT Strategy Jam Group Questions

Based on their work, a more specific set of suggested actions are discussed below.
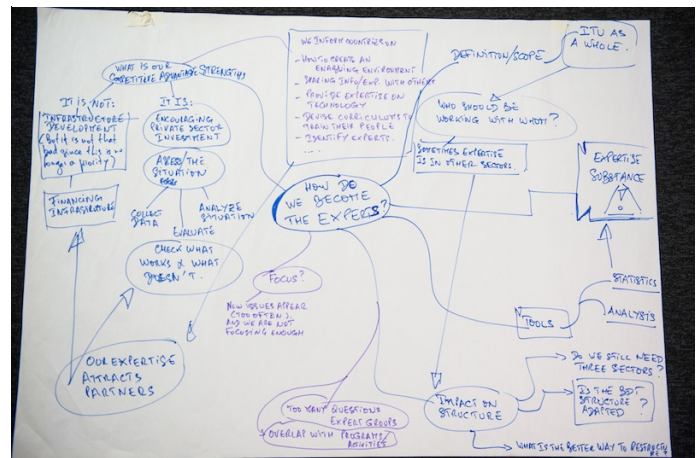
BDT should focus on being a knowledge or expert center

Several groups suggested that the BDT needed to establish itself as more of a "knowledge or expert center" for our membership and leverage our current activities of being a central knowledge repository in the sector. For example, the *Experts Group* explored the specific challenge question "How do we become experts?".

Figure 5: BDT Strategy Jam Experts Group Prototype

"The Experts are willing to transform the BDT into an ICT Knowledge Centre. Our demonstrated ability to gather data should be further improved by increasing our analytics skills with a view to providing relevant profiles to our stakeholders, be it in market analysis, be it a regulatory framework evaluation, be it a technical watch-up. We should be able to provide the political, economic, strategic, technical, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) profile of any given territory and region. The information we develop should be completed by a repository of case studies and best practices, as well a wealth of scientific publication from our Academia membership. Internal expertise should be developed as well to adapt to new technologies and to new areas of competence required by our membership.
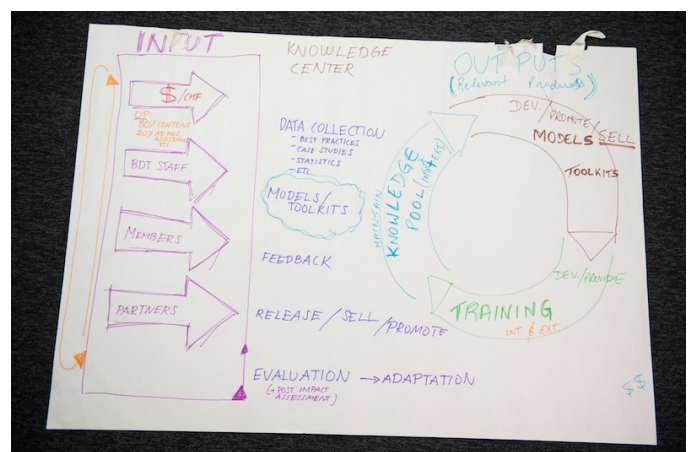

We should become a reference centre and when new issues arise, our membership at large, as well as the civil society, the media and the general public should consider the BDT as the first source of information regarding ICT development issues. When internal resources are not sufficient, we should be able to activate a large network of competencies to answer to the needs. This network will be based on current Member States and Sector Members, Associates and Academia, but should increase as we expand our competences and credibility in the global ICT community."

This group also emphasized the importance of marketing our expertise: *"We are in an advanced and competitive sector, therefore, MARKETING is essential/must have to implement, promote, distribute and sell ideas and services."*

Figure 6: The BDT Strategy Jam Innovators Group Prototype

Likewise, the *Innovators Group* also suggested that the BDT needed to establish itself as more of a "knowledge center" for our membership. In this regard, they explored as a specific challenge the question "How might we structure this knowledge center?". They broke this down into what would be the main inputs and outputs of such a knowledge center (see Figure 6) and emphasized that the bulk of resources should be allocated to the development of content.

"The main inputs to the knowledge center are BDT staff, input from the members and from partners, as well as the operational BDT budget. Of the BDT

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budget, 80% would be dedicated to developing content for running the knowledge center to the benefit of the membership and the remaining 20% for ad hoc assistance and other activities.

The focus of the activities in the BDT as a knowledge center would be fivefold: the collection of data (e.g. best practices, case studies, statistics), the development of models and toolkits, the gathering of feedback on the models/toolkits developed to ensure they are useful and meet the needs of the membership, the release of the models/toolkits and their promotion, and the evaluation of the activities under taken, adaptation of the models/toolkits and post implementation assessment.

The main outputs or products of the knowledge center can group under three main categories:

1. *Developing, promoting and ensuring the usefulness of the models and toolkits;*
2. *Providing training and courses (in-house and externally) based on the models and toolkits;*
3. *Maintaining a knowledge pool made up of internal and external experts for relevant topics and interest areas."*

Similarly, the *BDT Builders Group* suggested that the BDT's activities should be more "project based" built around a core set of expertise rather than structured along the ITU-D's strategic objectives.

BDT should consolidate/package its activities under a few themes or work areas

Several groups suggested that the BDT needed to consolidate its dispersed activities under a limited number of themes or work areas. In particular, a number of parties noted that the current ITU-D Strategic Objectives (See Annex A) could be divided into core versus crosscutting objectives which suggested a possible recognition of this at the next World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-14). Specifically, there were suggestions that this consolidation also be reflected in how the BDT approaches its activities. For example, the *Remain Relevant/Walk the Talk Group*, suggested:

*"**Consolidate**: to avoid dispersing limited resources across a large number of work areas (which can lead to limited impact), it is proposed to **consolidate** the work done at the BDT by bringing together topics and teams under limited number of work areas with the aim to maximize the use of resources and to increase the potential impact of our activities. Three broad areas (strategic objectives) can be thought of: Infrastructure (TND), Services/Applications (CYB, SIS, etc.) and Enabling Environment (Regulations, Stats, Policies, HCB, etc.). All programs, regional initiatives, Study groups, etc. can be brought under each of those three strategic objectives. Partnership, innovation, Gender, LDCs, etc. are cross cutting issues and should be mainstreamed into the three areas rather than working in silos.*

Figure 7: BDT Strategy Jam Remain Relevant/Walk the Talk Group Prototype
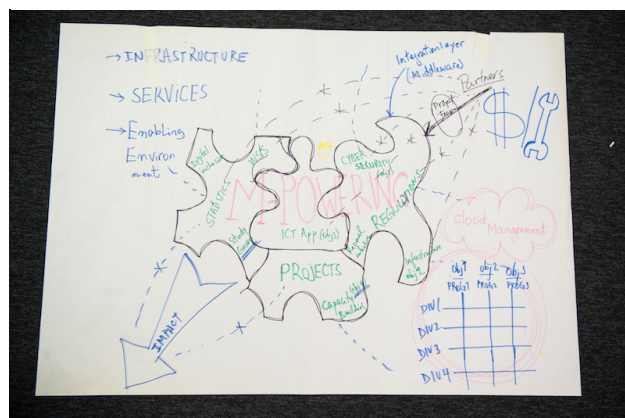
*Based on this consolidation, it can be proposed to **build bigger partnerships around big ideas** relevant to solve world problems under each of the three work areas (**to Remain Relevant**) e.g., Wireless BB initiative, mPowering Initiative, etc. where all divisions are contributing along their areas of*

expertise. The idea is to avoid approaching the same partners for small initiatives/projects but to consolidate under big initiatives where the funds can be allocated to different divisions based on their role/contribution to those initiatives. Big ideas should be renewed each 2-3 years.

*By adopting this "consolidation" approach, BDT can maximize the use of limited resources by building on each other's strengthen/expertise and feeding into the same big initiatives that are more visible and attracting more funding which will ultimately lead to enhanced impact on the ground (**Walk the Talk**) and improving our skill sets by focusing on limited number of key critical strategic areas rather than dealing with so many topics where our contribution can be limited."*

BDT Activities are too event driven

A number of participants noted that BDT activities tended to be "event driven" with too many events draining limited staff resources. As one commenter noted:

"There are too many parallel events and activities going on so that a large amount of time goes into the preparation of these events/activities. Given the limited amount of staff and resources, ITU needs to set clear priority areas and focus on those areas where it has real expertise."

A Final Word and Next Steps

The next World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-14) offers an opportunity to re-examine the ITU-D's strategic objectives and offer new opportunities for the BDT Director to redefine the BDT's structure and operational activities and emphasis. In order to build further on the ideas and prototypes explored during this BDT Strategy Jam on the theme "How might we change the value proposition of BDT and make it more relevant and impactful?", the next step will be posting the questions tackled by the seven groups on the ITU crowdsourcing platform at http://ideas.itu.int with further inputs solicited from all BDT professional staff.

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Annex A: ITU-D Strategic Objectives

ITU-D Strategic Objectives

The Strategic Objectives of ITU-D are:

Objective 1: To foster international cooperation, among ITU-D members and other stakeholders, on telecommunication/ICT development issues, by providing the pre-eminent forum for discussion, information sharing and consensus building on telecommunication/ICT technical and policy issues.

Objective 2: To assist the membership in maximizing the utilization of appropriate new technologies, including broadband, in developing their telecommunication/ICT infrastructures and services and in designing and deploying resilient telecommunication/ICT network infrastructures.

Objective 3: To foster the development of strategies to enhance the deployment, security and safe and affordable use of ICT applications and services towards mainstreaming telecommunications/ICTs in the broader economy and society.

Objective 4: To assist the membership in creating and maintaining an enabling policy and regulatory environment, including the establishment and implementation of sustainable national policies, strategies and plans, through sharing best practices and collecting and disseminating statistical information on telecommunication/ICT developments.

Objective 5: To build human and institutional capacity in order to improve skills in the development and use of telecommunication/ICT networks and applications, and to foster digital inclusion for people with special needs, such as persons with disabilities, through awareness-raising, training activities, sharing information and know-how and the production and distribution of relevant publications.

Objective 6: To provide concentrated and special assistance to least developed countries (LDCs) and countries in special need, and to assist ITU Member States responding to climate change and integrating telecommunications/ICTs in disaster management.