Experience Design Canvas™

Companion to Becoming a Catalyst | *John Coné*

Turning Everyday Work into a Richer Source of Capability

Purpose

People learn from work every day. They solve unfamiliar problems. Make decisions. Deal with customers. Try new technology. Collaborate with colleagues who know things they don't. Make mistakes. Discover shortcuts. Receive feedback. Encounter exceptions. Adjust. Yet much of the potential learning in those experiences is lost.

People may solve the problem without stopping to understand what they learned. They may discover something valuable that never reaches anyone else. They may repeat the same work without increasing their capability. Feedback may arrive too late—or not at all. Experts may provide answers rather than helping others develop judgment. A team may finish a project and immediately begin the next one.

The problem is usually not a shortage of experience. It is that **the experience of work has not been designed to produce as much learning as it could.**

The Experience Design Canvas™ helps a Catalyst examine work that is already happening and ask: **What is the smallest change we could make to this work that would significantly increase what people learn from doing it?**

The objective is not to add learning activities to work. It is to make the work itself **more learning-rich**.

1. THE WORK

What are people already doing?

Start with existing work.

A recurring meeting.

A customer interaction.

A project.

A decision.

A problem-solving process.

A new assignment.

A product launch.

A performance conversation.

A technology implementation.

A handoff.

A review.

An everyday workflow.

The work we want to examine is:

_____

_____

What are people trying to accomplish?

_____

_____

What does the experience look like today?

_____

_____

Catalyst caution

Do not begin by inventing a learning intervention.

Begin by understanding the work as people actually experience it.

2. THE LEARNING POTENTIAL

What could this work be teaching?

Now look at the work through a different lens. Because people are already doing this work, what might they reasonably become better able to do through the experience? Could they become better at:

making judgments?

solving unfamiliar problems?

working across boundaries?

using new technology?

understanding customers?

giving feedback?

recognizing patterns?

making decisions under uncertainty?

learning from data?

adapting?

The capability this work could help develop is:

_____

_____

What happens in the work that could develop that capability?

_____

_____

If people learned more from this work, what might they become better able to do?

_____

_____

Catalyst caution

Do not attach every desirable capability to the experience. Ask what this particular work is **naturally capable of teaching**.

3. THE LOST LEARNING

Where is the learning potential being lost?

This is the heart of the Canvas. Look at what is happening now. Where does potentially useful experience fail to become capability?

Perhaps people:

☐ don't recognize what they are learning.

☐ receive too little feedback.

☐ receive feedback too late.

☐ solve problems but don't examine how.

☐ get answers from experts without developing their own judgment.

☐ use AI in ways that bypass potentially valuable thinking or practice.

☐ rarely encounter different perspectives.

☐ repeat work that no longer stretches them.

☐ don't reflect.

☐ discover useful practices that don't travel.

☐ have no opportunity to apply what they learned again.

☐ move to the next task too quickly.

☐ cannot see the consequences of their decisions.

☐ lack the support needed to learn from difficult work.

☐ encounter valuable exceptions but treat them only as problems to eliminate.

The learning that could be happening but isn't is:

_____

_____

We think it is being lost because:

_____

_____

Catalyst caution

Don't assume you need to fix everything. Find the places where a **small change could release substantial learning**.

4. THE STRETCH

Does the work require people to grow?

Not all experiences are developmental. People can become extremely efficient at work that no longer teaches them very much. Ask whether the existing work requires people to operate beyond established routines.

Could they:

take on slightly greater responsibility?

handle a more complex case?

make a judgment someone else currently makes for them?

solve rather than escalate a problem?

work with someone outside their usual boundary?

explain their reasoning?

try a new approach?

teach someone else?

Where does the work already create useful stretch?

_____

Where has the work become too routine?

_____

What small change could create productive stretch?

_____

Catalyst caution

Do not manufacture difficulty for developmental purposes. The best stretch often comes from giving people **greater access to the real complexity already present in the work**.

5. THE EXPOSURE

What could people notice or encounter that they don't today?

Sometimes learning is lost because the experience is too narrow. People perform one part of a process without seeing what happens upstream or downstream or they serve customers without hearing what customers think. They make decisions without seeing their consequences or work near experts without seeing how those experts think.

Or maybe they just interact mostly with people who share their perspective.

Ask what could become visible.

What useful perspective, information, person, or situation is currently missing?

_____

_____

Could people benefit from encountering:

☐ the customer?

☐ the person performing another part of the work?

☐ an expert?

☐ a skeptic?

☐ a different function?

☐ someone who solved the problem differently?

☐ the consequences of their own work?

☐ unusual successes or failures?

☐ data they don't currently see?

☐ another perspective: _____

What is the smallest way to create that exposure?

_____

Catalyst caution

Don't automatically create another meeting. Sometimes the intervention is simply allowing someone to **see something they couldn't see before**.

6. THE SUPPORT

What could help people learn while doing the work?

Support should help people succeed without taking the learning away from them.

Consider:

a manager.

a peer.

an expert.

a coach.

an AI assistant.

a community.

a job aid.

examples.

data.

access to knowledge.

or someone available when the person gets stuck.

What support exists today?

_____

What is missing?

_____

What could we add, remove, or change?

_____

Could any existing support actually be reducing learning?

How is AI changing what people learn—or no longer learn—from doing this work?

_____

That last question is significant.

An expert (including AI) who immediately provides the answer may solve today's problem while preventing someone from developing tomorrow's capability. But don't preserve struggle simply because it once produced

learning. Ask whether AI should remove the work, support the learning, or change the capability people need to develop.

Catalyst caution

The objective is not maximum support. It is **the support that allows productive struggle**.

7. THE FEEDBACK + REFLECTION LOOP

How could people learn more from what just happened?

Work produces information constantly. The problem is that people don't always receive it, notice it, or make sense of it. A useful learning loop might be as simple as:

DO THE WORK → SEE WHAT HAPPENED → MAKE SENSE OF IT → ADJUST

Ask:

What feedback does the work already produce?

What feedback are people currently missing?

How could feedback arrive closer to the action?

Where could a moment of reflection fit naturally into the work?

What question might help?

Possibilities:

What surprised you?

What worked that you would do again?

What didn't work as expected?

What did you notice this time that you might have missed before?

What will you do differently next time?

Catalyst caution

Do not turn reflection into homework. A two-minute conversation at the right moment may produce more learning than a formal reflection exercise completed days later.

8. THE KNOWLEDGE MOVEMENT

Who else could use what is being learned?

People often learn from work, but organizations frequently don't. Someone discovers a better way or solves an unusual problem. They learn something about a customer, find a workaround, or discover that an assumption was wrong. But the learning stays with them.

Ask:

What useful knowledge is this work likely to produce?

Who else could use it?

How does that knowledge move today?

What is the smallest change that could help it travel?

Perhaps:

a conversation.

a demonstration.

a story.

a short recording.

a community post.

a shared example.

a peer exchange.

or simply connecting two people.

Catalyst caution

Do not turn every insight into content. Sometimes the fastest path for knowledge is **person to person**.

9. THE NEXT USE

Where will the learning go back into the work?

Learning becomes capability when people can use what they learned again. Ask where the next opportunity occurs.

Where will people encounter a similar challenge again?

What could they deliberately try differently next time?

How could the next experience build on the last one?

What would tell us that capability—not merely performance on one task—is improving?

Catalyst caution

Completion is not capability. The question is not merely whether people successfully did the work. It is whether doing the work leaves them **better able to do what comes next**.

10. THE RENOVATION

What is the smallest, useful change?

Now—and only now—decide what to change. Look back across the Canvas. You may have identified ten possibilities; but don't try to implement ten.

Ask:

What is the smallest change we could make to this work that would significantly increase what people learn from doing it?

We will:

_____

We will NOT:

_____

The change should make it more likely that people:

_____

We will know it is helping when:

_____

Catalyst caution

Beware of turning an elegant modification to work into a learning program. If a five-minute peer conversation solves the problem, don't create a curriculum around it.

11. THE REFINEMENT LOOP

What is the redesigned experience teaching us?

The redesign itself is an experiment. People using it will discover things we could not know in advance.

Ask:

What should we watch?

What are people telling us?

What seems to be producing more learning?

What is adding burden without adding value?

What should we adjust?

What might we try next?

Catalyst caution

Do not wait until the redesigned experience has been "implemented" before changing it. **Let the experience teach you how it should be designed.**

THE CANVAS AT A GLANCE

	Catalyst Question
WORK	What are people already doing?
LEARNING POTENTIAL	What could this work be teaching?
LOST LEARNING	Where is the learning potential being lost?
STRETCH	Does the work require people to grow?
EXPOSURE	What could people notice or encounter that they don't today?
SUPPORT	What could help people learn while doing the work?
FEEDBACK + REFLECTION	How could people learn more from what just happened?
KNOWLEDGE MOVEMENT	Who else could use what is being learned?

	Catalyst Question
NEXT USE	Where will the learning go back into the work?
RENOVATION	What is the smallest, useful change?
REFINEMENT	What is the redesigned experience teaching us?

THE POCKET VERSION

For many situations, a Catalyst won't need the full Canvas.

Six questions may be enough:

What work is already happening?

What could people be learning from it?

Where is that learning being lost?

What could make the work more learning-rich?

What is the smallest change worth trying?

What are we learning from the change?

DON'T ADD LEARNING. RELEASE IT.

The instinct of the learning profession has often been to see a capability need and ask:

What learning should we provide?

The Experience Design Canvas asks a different question:

What learning is already available in the work—and what is preventing people from getting more of it?

Sometimes the answer will require a substantial intervention. Often it won't.

A manager asks one additional question.

An employee sees the customer response to their work.

An expert stops providing the answer and instead explains how they reached it.

A team takes five minutes to examine an unexpected result.

Someone who discovers something useful tells the next person who needs it.

A routine assignment includes one unfamiliar responsibility.

Feedback arrives tomorrow instead of three months from now.

None of these changes turns work into a training program.

They simply make work **better at teaching**. And that, I think, is the real purpose of Experience Design.

SECTION V

HELP LEARNING MOVE

From experience to organizational capability

Learning Velocity Accelerator Kit™

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