DESIGN 101 · DIGITAL STUDIO

Learn + Use

Design Thinking & Prototyping Essentials for IDC

Practical design literacy for PMs + faster prototyping under real constraints.

Proposal & pilot recommendation · April 2026

Why now

Design demand is scaling faster than capacity — we need a better front door for early product thinking.

- **Limited design bandwidth**

  Demand for design outpaces the people available to do it.

- **Slow iteration**

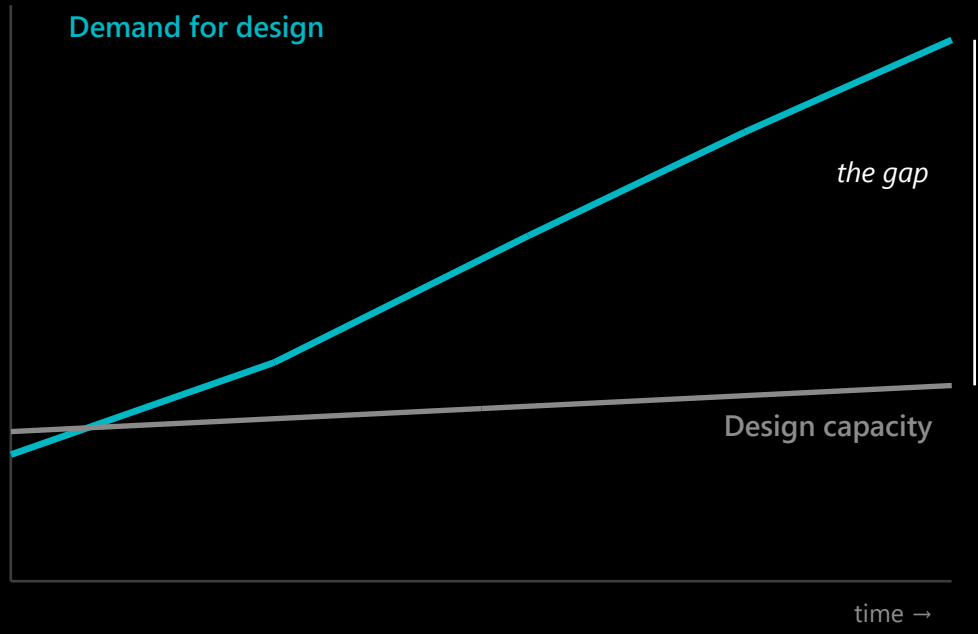
  Concepts stall in a queue instead of moving forward.

- **Over-dependence on design**

  PMs can't explore an idea without a designer in the loop.

- **Rising bar for 'show me'**

  Stakeholders want to see it, not read about it.



WHERE THIS IS GOING The ask: a small, guarded pilot — Design 101 + Prototype Lab, 1 cohort and 1–2 real scenarios. Not to make PMs designers — to improve framing, cut rework, and free UX for higher-value work.

What this is — and what it is NOT

This is NOT

- ✗ ~~Training PMs to be designers~~
- ✗ ~~Replacing UX or design craft~~
- ✗ ~~Making polished, production UI~~
- ✗ ~~Skipping research, accessibility, or review~~

What it IS — what PMs own

- ✓ Framing problems clearly
- ✓ Identifying workflow + friction
- ✓ Creating low-fi concepts
- ✓ Aligning on intent before design engages

Design is a profession built on years of craft. This doesn't shortcut that — it gives PMs a narrow, well-guarded on-ramp so designers spend their depth where it matters most.

What we heard

01

PMs need to prototype

Not just spec — show the idea to align faster.

02

Quality still matters

A rough prototype can't feel careless or off-brand.

03

Tools should reduce rework

Start closer to 'right', spend less time redoing.

04

Fit IDC reality

Time-boxed, real scenarios, real constraints.

A two-track model: Learn + Use

TRACK A

Learn — Design 101

Build baseline design fluency for PMs

- 2 × 90-minute sessions
- Problem framing → user needs
- Concept vs. prototype
- Shared language & mindset

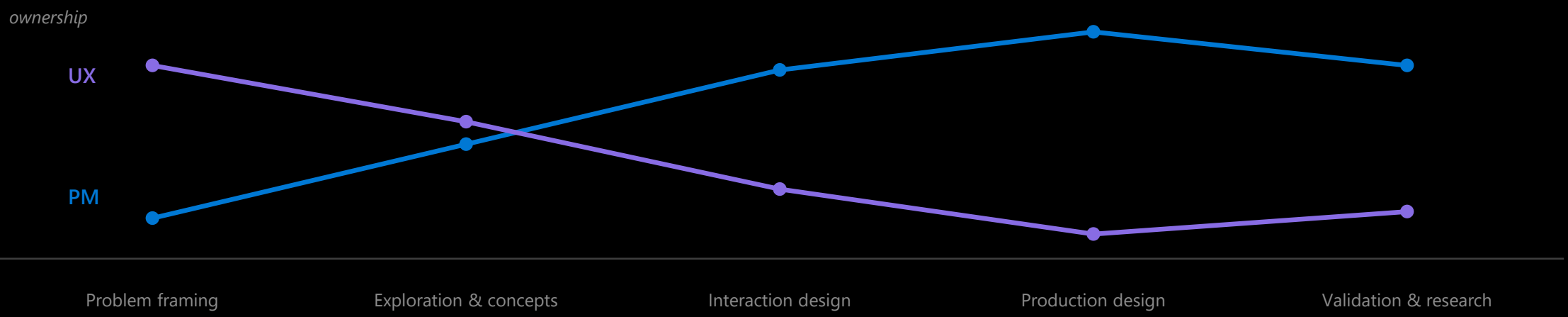
TRACK B

Use — Prototype Lab

Apply to real IDC scenarios

- Rapid prototyping with AI + guardrails
- Hands-on, scenario-driven
- Output: a tangible prototype direction
- Clear next steps to carry forward

Where UX comes in



Stage	PM role	UX role
Problem framing	**Lead**	Support
Exploration & concepts	Assist	**Co-create**
Interaction design	Support	**Lead**
Production design	—	**Own**
Validation & research	Support	**Lead**

What UX gets back

- Fewer cold-start asks
- Better-framed problems & clearer intent
- Less rework from ambiguous requirements
- More time for deep craft, systems & validation

Design 101: build the foundation

Audience

- PMs across IDC
- No design background assumed
- Mixed levels welcome

Structure

- 2 × 90-min sessions
- Concepts + mini exercises
- Low time commitment

Outcomes

- Shared design vocabulary
- Problem-framing skills
- Confidence to start

Prototype Lab: apply it for real

Audience

- PMs who completed Learn
- Working on a real scenario
- Small cohort

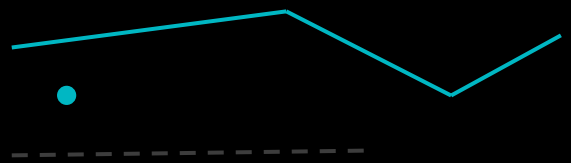
Structure

- 2 hands-on labs
- Frame + Map, then Prototype
- AI-assisted, guardrailed

Outcomes

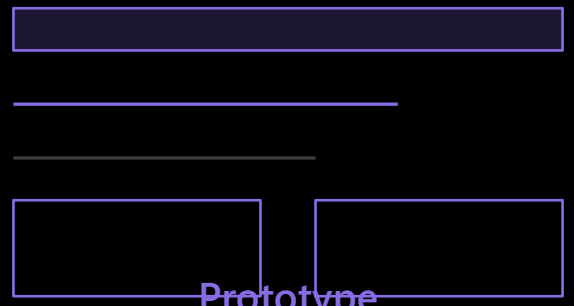
- A low-fi prototype direction
- Peer critique applied
- Defined next steps

Concept vs. Prototype vs. Product



Concept

Rough idea — communicate intent



Prototype

Structure & flow — low-fi, clickable

Product

Pixel-perfect — shipped, supported

increasing fidelity →

PMs work in the first two. UX owns the third.

A good PM prototype: ✓ solves the right problem ✓ communicates intent ✓ aligns to UX guardrails ✗ is NOT pixel-perfect

The method: a simple, repeatable flow

Understand the problem & the people

Frame the real problem to solve

Explore concepts & prototype

Test, refine & hand off

Design Thinking, kept lightweight — a system for better problem solving, not ceremony.

Role of the guide / tool

AI/GenAI as an accelerator — not a replacement for judgment. It helps PMs:

1

Ask better questions

Sharpen problem framing before jumping to solutions.

2

Structure thinking

Move from messy inputs to a clear, shareable shape.

3

Document decisions

Capture the why, the trade-offs, and what's next.

4

Repeat the process

A consistent path others can pick up and reuse.

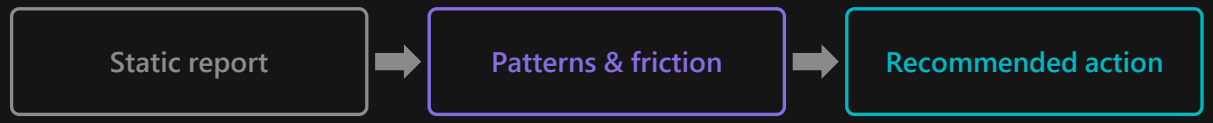
AI helps structure the path. UX still owns judgment, craft, validation, and quality.

Example use cases

REAL IDC SCENARIO

From management insights to action

A PM needs to move beyond static reporting to what should happen next — which patterns are emerging, where friction is building, which events need intervention, and what to recommend.



PM frames the decision & the flow · UX shapes the experience & owns the craft

ALSO

Onboarding flow

Reframe a confusing first-run and prototype a clearer path.

ALSO

Internal tool friction

Map where a daily workflow breaks down, then mock a smoother version.

Session model: short, applied, hands-on

LEARN

Session 1 — Thinking system

Why design matters · 4Ds / lifecycle · what 'design-ready' means · mini exercise

Session 2 — The path

Problem → prototype · Jobs to be Done / friction · 'good enough' prototyping · guardrails + critique

USE

Lab 1 — Frame + Map

Define the problem · map workflow + friction · pick the scenario

Lab 2 — Prototype + Review

Build a low-fi flow · apply guardrails · peer critique · define next steps

Output = a real, usable prototype direction — not theory.

OUTCOMES

What success looks like

✓

Better framing

Problems are defined before solutions are drawn.

MEASURE

% of scenarios with a clear problem, user, friction & success criteria

✓

Faster prototyping

Ideas become tangible in hours, not weeks.

MEASURE

Time from idea to a low-fi prototype direction

✓

Fewer review cycles

Start closer to 'right' — less rework downstream.

MEASURE

Reduction in clarification loops before UX engages

✓

Consistent starting points

A shared, repeatable on-ramp for every PM.

MEASURE

Adoption of a common framing template across the cohort

RECOMMENDATION

Our highest-value move is not teaching PMs to be designers.

It is giving them a shared, guard-railed on-ramp — so design's depth lands where it matters most.

01

1 cohort

A single, focused PM group to run end-to-end.

02

1–2 scenarios

Real IDC problems the team already cares about.

03

Learn + Use

Both tracks, so we test the full arc once.

04

Measure & iterate

Capture outcomes, refine, then expand.

Start small. Prove it. Then scale. Design isn't only for designers — it's a system for better problem solving.