
**Service excellence — Designing
excellent service to achieve
outstanding customer experiences**

*Excellence de service — Concevoir un service d'excellence pour des
expériences clients exceptionnelles*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 312, *Excellence in service*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

Customer expectations in today's competitive world have changed and are constantly evolving and growing. In order to maintain and increase their customer base, organizations must create better and more differentiated customer experiences. For this reason, it is essential for organizations to understand customer expectations, needs, wishes, problems and experiences. These are used as inputs for service design.

Excellent service is key to achieving outstanding customer experience, which leads to customer delight. Building a better and continuous relationship with customers through excellent service differentiates the organization from its competitors.

ISO 23592 defines service excellence as an organization's capability that enables "individual excellent service provision" (Level 3) and "surprisingly excellent service provision" (Level 4) in the service excellence pyramid shown in [Figure 1](#). Compared to "service excellence" as an organization's capability, this document describes "excellent service" as an offering with individual and surprisingly excellent service performed between the organization and the customer. This facilitates the creation of outstanding customer experiences by the organization to achieve customer delight. The delivery of excellent service requires a foundation comprising a "core service proposition" (Level 1) and "customer feedback management" (Level 2) to ensure customer satisfaction, as shown in [Figure 1](#). These are described in International Standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 10002 and ISO/IEC 20000-1.

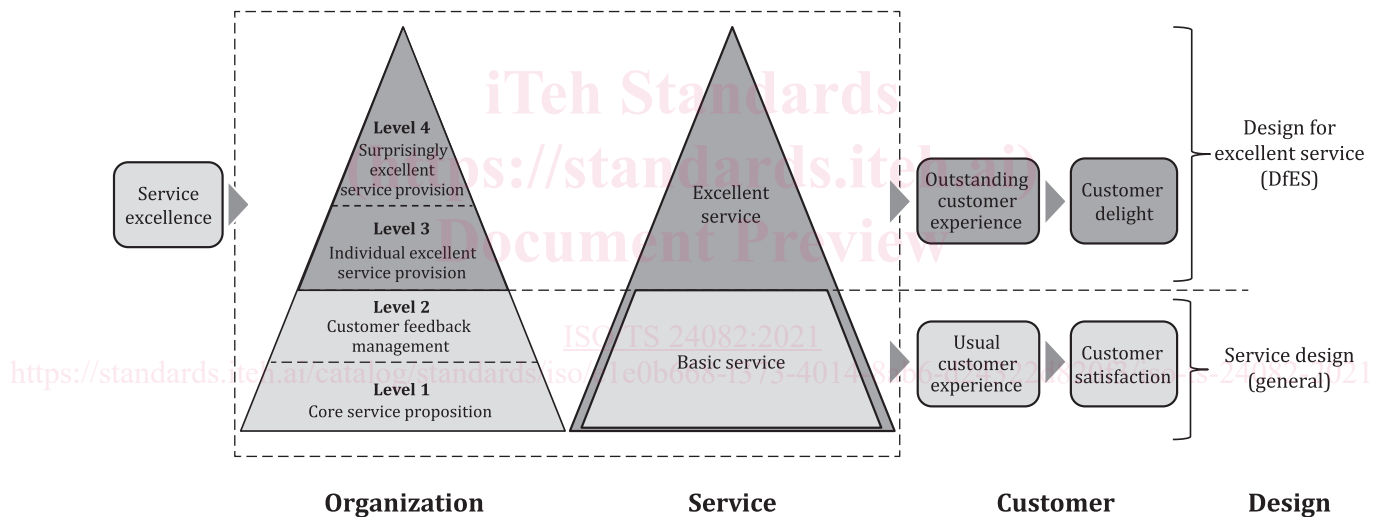


Figure 1 — Interlinkage within the service excellence pyramid and design of excellent service

The organization should understand its role, importance and difference between customer delight and customer satisfaction, in order to enhance its ability to provide that delight. It should also explore ways of developing and maintaining customer delight.

A specific design standard to achieve excellent service is necessary for better business success. The following design standards and methods have been adopted in many organizations but these do not adequately cover how to create excellent service that leads to customer delight:

- human-centred design (HCD) described in ISO 9241-210 and ISO 9241-220;
- *Design Thinking*, promoted by IDEO and the Stanford d.school^[15];
- *This is Service Design Thinking*^[16], which builds on the work of the above two design approaches.

The service provider makes value propositions intended to create valuable outcomes for the customer. Value can be also co-created through customer experience and feedback, and the benefits are realized by both the service provider and the customer. The increased use of the internet, sensory and digital technologies encourages co-creation.

This document highlights designing excellent service with a co-creation mechanism for continuous customer delight. As shown in [Table 1](#), the clauses in this document specify the elements belonging to the dimension “Creating outstanding customer experiences” of the service excellence model in ISO 23592.

Table 1 — The relationship between the service excellence model (columns) and this document (rows)

		Creating outstanding customer experiences		
		Understanding customer needs, expectations and desires	Designing and renewing outstanding customer experiences	Service innovation management
Clause 4 Principles of design for excellent service				
4.2	Emotional	✓	✓	
4.3	Adaptive	✓	✓	
4.4	Co-creative with customer	✓	✓	✓
4.5	Consistent with organization and customer perspectives	✓	✓	✓
Clause 5 Design activities of excellent service				
5.2	Planning a design project on excellent service	✓	✓	✓
5.3	Understanding and empathizing with the customer	✓		
5.4	Defining a design challenge and a unique value proposition	✓	✓	
5.5	Designing an outstanding customer experience with touchpoints and data points		✓	✓
5.6	Designing a co-creation environment		✓	✓
5.7	Evaluating the design for excellent service	✓	✓	✓

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Service excellence — Designing excellent service to achieve outstanding customer experiences

1 Scope

This document specifies principles and activities for designing excellent service that achieve outstanding customer experience. It applies to all organizations delivering services, such as commercial organizations, public services and not-for-profit organizations.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 23592:2021, *Service excellence — Principles and model*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 23592 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

excellent service output of an organization with high level of service provision performed between the organization and the customer to achieve outstanding customer experiences that lead to *customer delight* (3.2)

Note 1 to entry: Examples of high level of service provision are individual excellent service provision (Level 3) and surprisingly excellent service provision (Level 4) in the service excellence pyramid.

[SOURCE: ISO 23592:2021, 3.2]

3.2

customer delight

positive emotions experienced by the customer derived from either an intense feeling of being highly valued or by expectations being exceeded, or both

Note 1 to entry: Further emotions like surprise can intensify felt customer delight.

[SOURCE: ISO 23592:2021, 3.5]

3.3

design for excellent service

DfES

systematic design and development approach to creating outstanding customer experiences via individual and surprisingly *excellent service* (3.1) provision

Note 1 to entry: The underlying methodology behind such a design approach is known as “design for X” or “DfX” methodology, see for example ISO Guide 64 for “design for environment” (DfE).

3.4

co-creation

active involvement of stakeholders in service design, delivery and innovation

Note 1 to entry: Stakeholders include organizations, personnel and customers.

[SOURCE: ISO 23592:2021, 3.3, modified — Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.5

co-creation environment

surroundings that facilitate *co-creation* (3.4)

3.6

unique value proposition

clear statement of the benefits the organization offers, how it solves customer problems (relevance), how it elicits a better emotional experience and what distinguishes it from its competitors

3.7

customer journey

series or sum of customer experiences when engaging with an organization, its products or services

Note 1 to entry: “Series” is based on processes; “sum” is based on results.

[SOURCE: ISO 23592:2021, 3.8]

3.8

touchpoint

point of customer contact or a medium through which a customer interacts with an organization, its products or services

3.9

data point

occasion when and where the *service provider* (3.10) observes and collects information about the customer or receives customer experience feedback

Note 1 to entry: Examples of the content of data points include information captured about behaviours and responses of customers and information about delivery processes.

3.10

service provider

organization that manages and delivers a service or services to customers

Note 1 to entry: Organizations include sub-contractors and personnel, such as employees.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018, 3.2.24, modified — Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.11

customer-centricity

customer orientation with a special focus on value creation and value acquisition

4 Principles of design for excellent service

4.1 Overview

The service excellence effect chain in the upper part of [Figure 2](#) shows how service excellence leads to higher benefits for the organization by achieving customer delight. The following elements in the service excellence effect chain play an important role in designing excellent service:

- implementation of service excellence, which supports design process and feasibility of excellent services;

- excellent service, which is designed by organizations;
- outstanding customer experience and customer delight, which are targeted and incorporated into design goals.

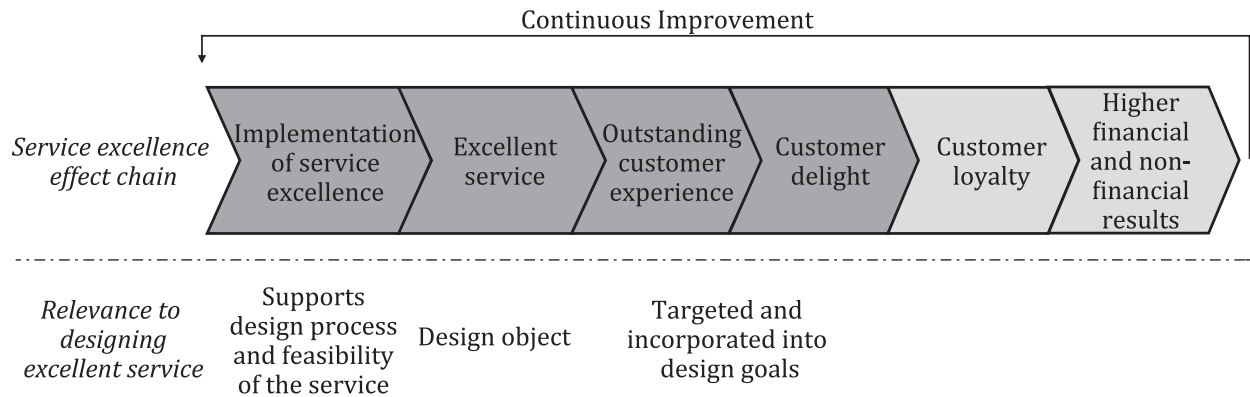


Figure 2 — Service excellence effect chain and designing excellent service

This document uses the term “design for excellent service (DfES)”. As shown in [Figure 1](#), DfES addresses the upper half of the service excellence pyramid. General service design for basic service is not specified in this approach or in this document.

The principles of DfES described in this clause are:

- emotional;
- adaptive;
- co-creative with the customer;
- consistent with organization and customer perspectives.

NOTE See [Annex A](#) on the general principles of service design thinking^[17], which differ from those of DfES in this clause. Designing excellent service as a whole can adapt these general principles and their relevant tools to ensure basic service.

4.2 Emotional

Excellent services should be designed to bring positive emotions to customers. Customer delight can be achieved with such positive emotions so that customers feel that the service is being customized to suit their individual situations, that they are highly valued or both. Surprise can be an emotion that intensifies the delight felt by the customer. The organization should understand the importance and role of customer delight in contrast to customer satisfaction in the delivery of excellent services and seek ways to enhance further customer delight.

4.3 Adaptive

Excellent services should be designed to enable organizations to adapt and respond promptly to various changes in customers, their circumstances and environment. This should be done both in the service delivery process and through continual improvement.

NOTE Environment includes external factors such as regulatory, economic, political, social and globally impacting changes affecting the organization.

4.4 Co-creative with customer

Excellent services should involve customers in the service design process, delivery process or both, thus co-creating value. The organization should understand, facilitate and be prepared for the co-creation process. The organization makes value propositions intended to create valuable outcomes for the customer. Value can also be co-created through customer experience and feedback, and the benefits are realized by both the organization and the customer. Co-created value can increase the likelihood of creating customer delight and customer loyalty.

4.5 Consistent with organization and customer perspectives

Excellent services should be designed by utilizing the organization's capability and by meeting the customer's perspective. To ensure excellent service, the organization should use the service excellence pyramid (Figure 1) to define its current level. Then the organization should enhance its capabilities so as to enhance the service so the customer can achieve a feeling of customer delight.

5 Design activities of excellent service

5.1 Overall process

5.1.1 General

This clause describes the key activities for DfES where organizations develop a new service, review an existing service or both, with the aim of improving the services. Once the decision has been made to create excellent service for customer delight, organizations should plan the service design project.

After the planning activity, organizations should execute the following DfES activities:

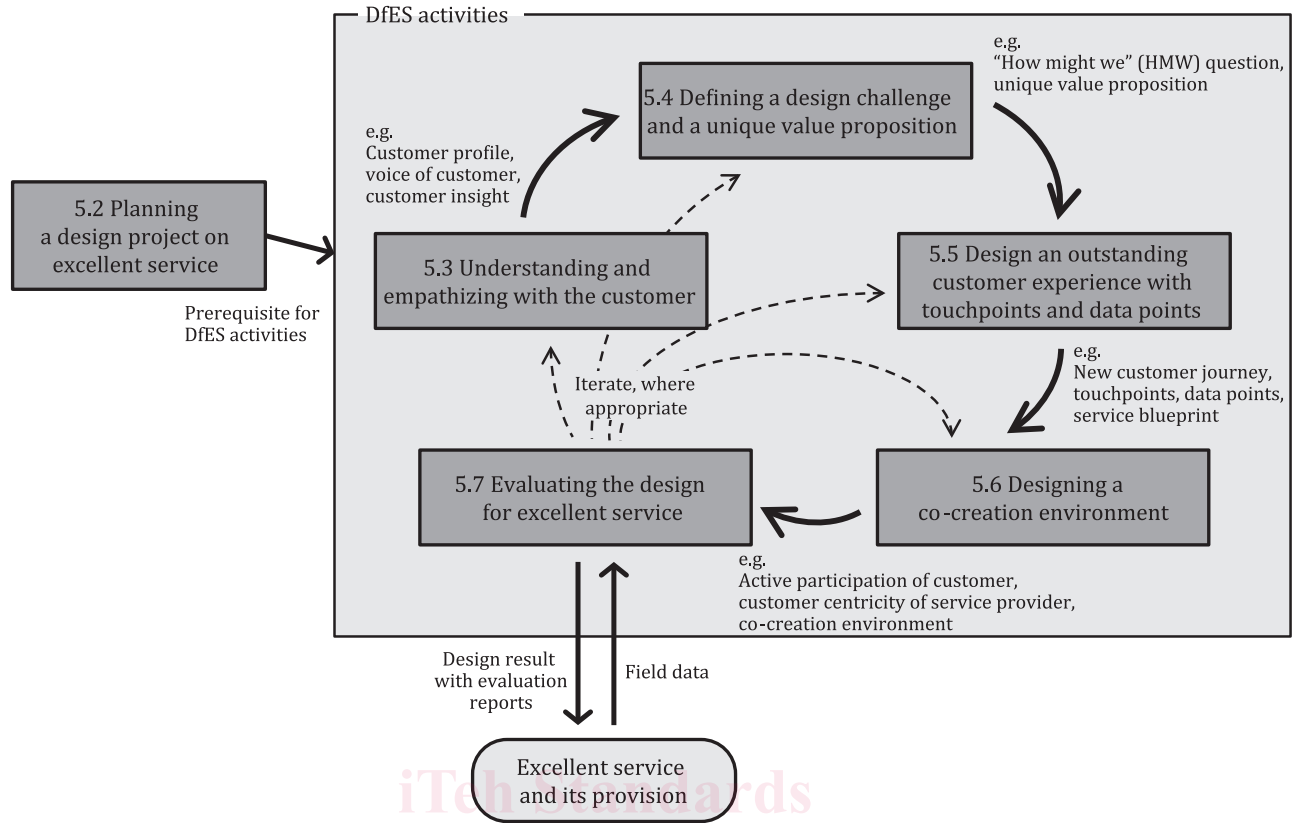
- understanding and empathizing with the customer;
- defining a design challenge and a unique value proposition;
- designing outstanding customer experience with touchpoints and data points;
- designing a co-creation environment to enhance outstanding customer experience;
- evaluate the design for excellent service.

Organizations should incorporate these DfES activities in the organization's design approach(es) to ensure and reinforce basic service. The activities can be repeated in cyclical fashion as needed, until the desired outcomes are achieved.

NOTE Examples of design approaches are design thinking^[15] and human-centred design (e.g. ISO 9241-210 and ISO 9241-220). They represent collaborative and iterative processes. Among these, the five activities (empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test) are well known.

5.1.2 Interdependencies among design activities of excellent service

Figure 3 illustrates the process of designing excellent service when all DfES activities are undertaken, starting with the analysis of customer. The inner diagram illustrates interdependencies among DfES activities, which show where necessary information is output and input. For example, 5.4 requires information about targeted customer profile and customer insights, which is output by 5.3. A project plan according to 5.2 is shared and refers to any activity in 5.3 to 5.7. These activities are also iterated where appropriate, especially following on from the results of evaluation activity. Excellent services are prepared as a result of these design activities. Delivering and managing the excellent service produces field data that triggers a new evaluation activity. Field data includes operational data of the services and how much the services achieve outstanding customer experience and customer delight, which are depicted in the service excellence effect chain.



Key
 ———> interdependency (input-output)
 - - - -> iteration

NOTE 5.2 to 5.7 represent subclause numbers.

Figure 3 — The process of designing excellent service and interdependencies among design activities

There is no required order in which to perform the DfES activities. The design focus and process undertaken for the project should be determined by the results of the analysis conducted to learn why the customer is not delighted. The starting point is not limited to 5.3. In such cases, necessary input for a starting DfES activity can be prepared based on the existing service system and design information.

5.1.3 Design elements in the delivery of excellent service

Figure 4 represents elements of excellent service depicted from a customer’s standpoint, which are detailed in 5.3 to 5.7. The inner circular arrow in the figure shows a customer journey and the outer circular arrow depicts the service delivery process and the organizational activities of the service provider that support it. Services are prepared and delivered through cooperation among service providers, including subcontractors, within a customer-centred network. The customer and service provider interact at touchpoints, which are shared by the two circular arrows. Customer delight can be achieved when an outstanding customer experience is created through individual and surprisingly excellent service provision in the customer journey. A customer journey continues as the customer returns for repeat business, while the service provider continues with the next design and management activities. Data points described in 5.5.4 are collected in the customer journey, the service delivery process and during touchpoints interactions. The co-creation environment, as described in 5.6, surrounds the excellent service to facilitate co-creation.

NOTE See Annex E for a method of customer journey mapping.