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# Post-COVID Shared Spaces: From Response to Reimagination

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*In today's world of fear and unease and social distancing, it's hard to imagine sharing experiences like these ever again. I don't know when it will be safe to return... but I do know that we will do it again, because we have to. It's not a choice. **We're human.** We need moments that reassure us that we are not alone. That we are understood. That we are imperfect. And, most important, that we need each other.*

— Dave Grohl, Foo Fighters  
*The Atlantic, May 2020*

# Respond > Reignite

As we approach getting back to the shared spaces of our lives, those that are responsible for managing and operating those spaces and experiences will need to be focused on moving from their initial [responses](#) (closures, partial operations) to what must happen to restart, or [reignite](#) them.

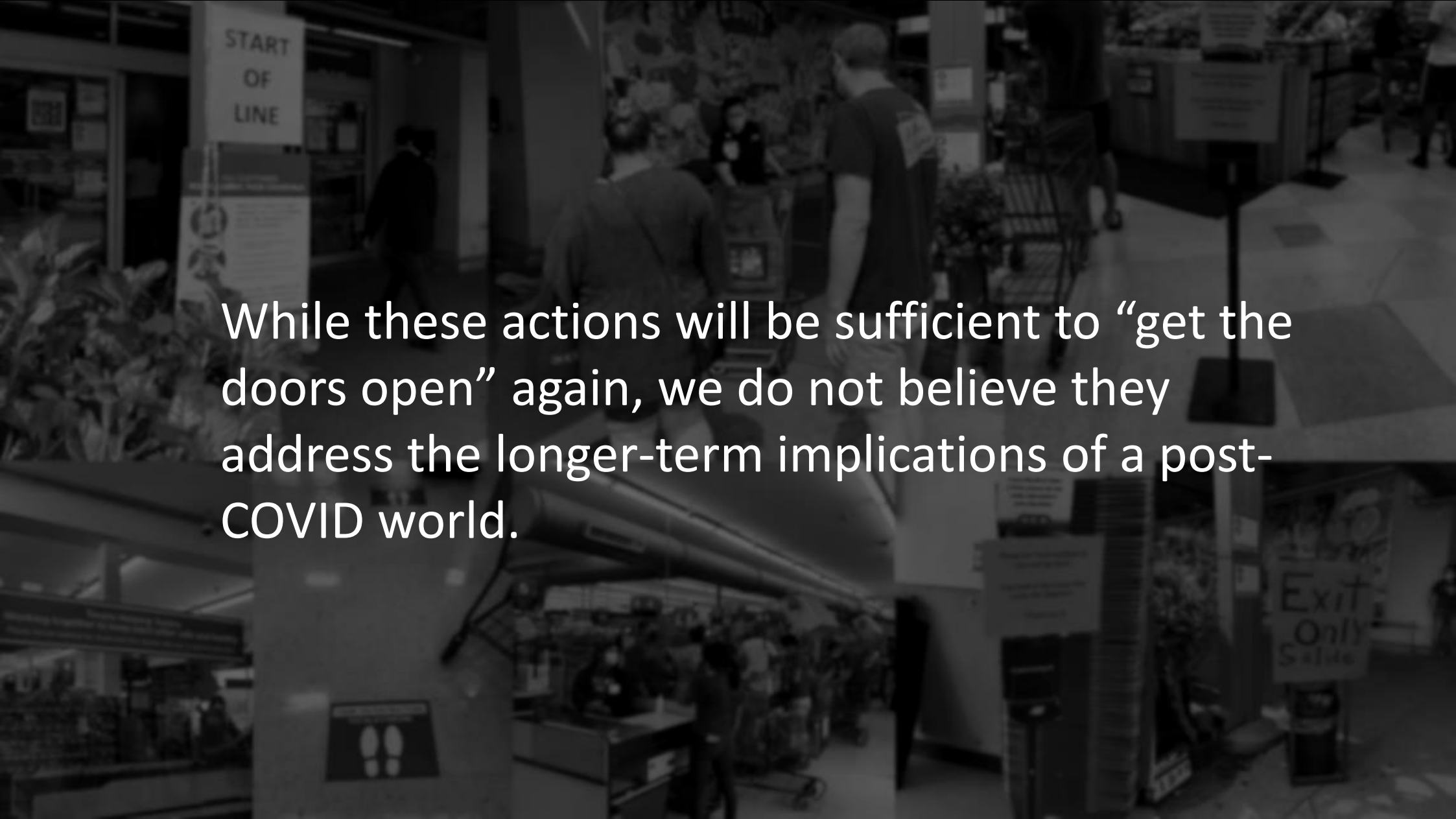
Retail stores  
Restaurants  
Workplaces  
Airports  
Hotels  
Medical Offices  
Schools  
Museums  
Trade shows  
Arenas

# Respond > Reignite

As we re-open, the spaces we share will have to make, or have made, immediate accommodations. We have all seen the short-term “fixes” employed in many of the places, being deemed essential (eg. grocery stores, pharmacies), to address the immediate need to mitigate contagion.

## REIGNITE CHECKLIST:

- Occupancy management with controlled entry and exit to limit customer density and adjacencies
- Requirements for all customers, employees and visitors, to wear masks or face coverings
- Touch-free entrances and exits
- Disinfectant instillations to provide hand-sanitizing upon on entry and exit
- Signage and notifications for modifying behaviors in the space (“6 ft rules”) and bringing into focus measures being taken to ensure health and safety
- More visible cleaning and disinfecting during operating hours
- Transparent barriers for unavoidable interactions areas (check-out areas, reception and service desks)
- More access to digital self-service, payment and automated fulfillment
- A doubling-down on outdoor fulfillment methods (Drive-Thru’s, Curbside and Delivery)
- Improvements to omni-channel experiences connecting physical spaces with digital channels (Click & Collect, Inventory checking, Store Navigation)



While these actions will be sufficient to “get the doors open” again, we do not believe they address the longer-term implications of a post-COVID world.

# Respond > Reignite > Reimagine

Businesses and brands need to understand what are and what will be, the drivers of customer behavior so they can **reimagine** their experiences and services to deliver against them.

To do this they will need to embrace a view into the lives of their constituents with *empathy* and *rigor*, while adopting a digital-innovation mindset as they start to shape “what’s next.”

What has changed?

How have customer expectations been altered? For how long?

What will have changed permanently?

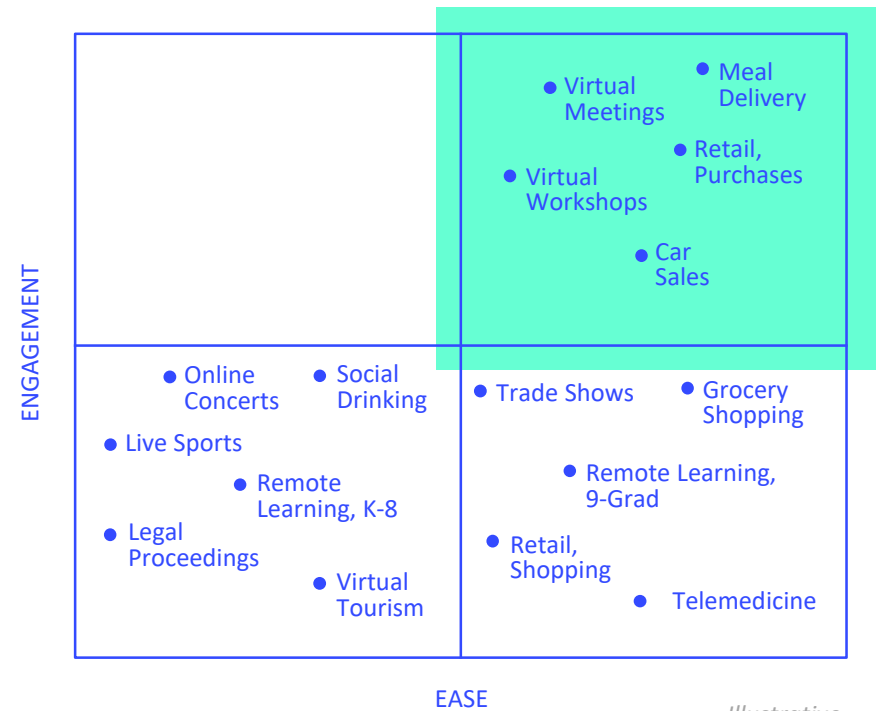
What have we learned or adopted during this colossal “time out?”

# What's Next?

No one really knows the answer to the question, “What’s next?,” but what we have observed through our work in experience design is that people mostly seem to change their behaviors based on two factors; *ease* and *engagement*.

In this period we have all been introduced to new experiences out of necessity. Some of the “new” experiences that are *easier* will be relied on more post-crisis. But others, those that, have fallen short on being a richer or more personal interaction, might not become part of someone’s new routine. Similarly, if we’ve found that some of the experiences are indeed *better*, but are not as convenient or more complicated, they might not “stick.”

But some of these digitally-enabled experiences have introduced both easier and better ways of doing things. It is this type of experience that has the best chance to become part of the “new possible.”



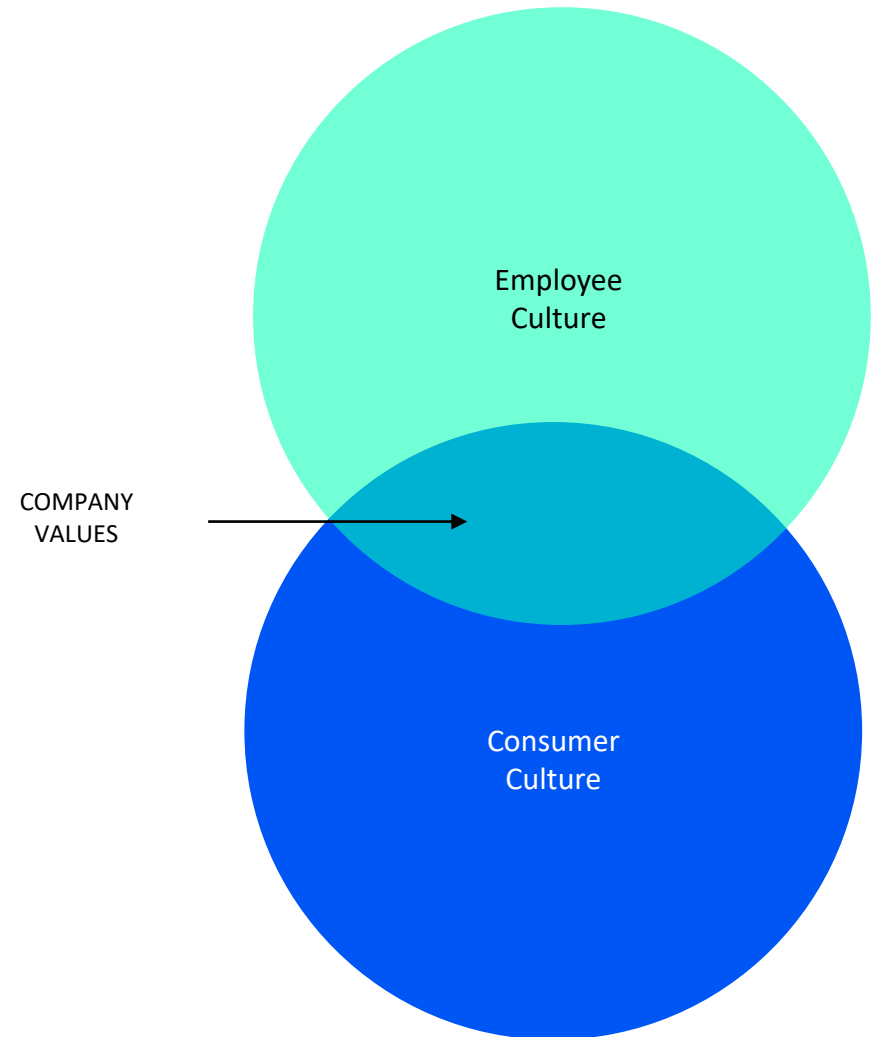
Illustrative

# Culture, not Just Chemistry

Businesses have begun to recognize they operate within two distinct domains; The culture of their customers and the culture of their employees and it won't be enough to have technical fixes for cleaning and sanitizing. They will have to address the "hearts, minds and bodies" of their constituents as well.

How can businesses employ "radical empathy" to sense what cultural influences their stakeholders are operating under?

Customers opinions and behaviors are being shaped everyday by media and their friends and families. How might companies adjust their employee cultures (values, behaviors, rituals) to deliver the next generation of experiences, products and services? How might these adjusted cultures expand the meaning and relevance of "shared spaces?"





With the development of a real **understanding** of the cultural context, the proven drivers of behavior and new experiences will rise to the top, enabling businesses to **reimagine** what needs to change now. This embrace of cultural context will also accelerate the digital transformation of their customer and user experiences, spaces...and their brands.

# The Role of the Brand: Trust

Brand has always played a critical role in driving behavior.

**Foundationally, brand relationships are built on *trust*, and trust will be tested either by how the company did or did not respond to the crisis, or how it is seen to be restarting.**

We have always believed that successful brands are built with empathy, expressed with clarity, and delivered through compelling experiences. In this next period, how organizations embrace and commit to each principle highlighted here (empathy, clarity, experiences) will be paramount.

## Empathy

Not just insights but “understanding” what really matters to customers (Safety? Convenience? Price? Affinity?) in their lives—both personal and professional.

## Clarity

Clarity of purpose as much as clarity of communications; having a meaningful credible purpose, and story- explain how you are being true to your north star; expressing what you have done, are doing and will do through the channels that reach and resonate with your important audiences...especially now.

## Experiences

This will be the heart of the matter; credibility and *trust will not be (re)established through what businesses say but what they do*. The old saying “actions speak louder than words” will never be more true.

# The New Possible

While companies will need to communicate how they are living up to their purpose and values, and their commitment to keeping employees and customers safe, they will also have to earn the *trust* of those interacting in their spaces.

How will companies (re)earn trust? How can they use this moment to not only reestablish themselves, but to accelerate the transformation that was in front of them even before the crisis?

To answer these big questions, we think they will need to operationalize new ways of conceiving experiences and spaces by embracing the *new possible*<sup>1</sup> enabled by the convergence of digital technologies in physical environments.

- **Digital tools** in physical spaces that enable “no touch” operations such as motion actuation, facial recognition, voice activation and gestural interfaces among others
- Better **mobile device utilizations and integration with physical interactions** to make the environment seamlessly integrated
- Develop “**Sensing**” **capabilities and user data capture** to give operators better understanding of how density and adjacencies can be better managed, and to track behaviors for better and safer operability *while also* addressing data security, privacy and surveillance concerns
- Digital technologies that make **interaction and collaboration** spaces more purposeful, work better, more conveniently and be more engaging, while keeping people safe
- **Physical innovations** to make layouts, interiors, materials, fixtures, furnishings and equipment work together to deliver effective yet safer interactions, and spaces that are easier to keep clean and sanitize

If done well, these new environments can become an important driver of preference and loyalty because of the trust and assurances delivered through **evident safety**, as well as convenience, value and affinity. Put simply: These experiences can make your brand matter.

# CX = Relevance

# First Steps

Before companies start to deploy technology, they need to develop the right *strategy and new experience principles* from which to operate. In conjunction with developing a rich understanding of what will drive expectations and behaviors in shared spaces, and insights into the new experience adoptions we see coming out of the COVID crisis, an evaluation of current spaces and uses is needed. You should start by answering the following questions:

What is the purpose of the space—inclusive of, and beyond the functional program?

What is the role of the space for different customers in their experience journey vis a vis use of other channels?

What does the space enable in an easier or more engaging way?

How does the space deliver the purpose and values of the brand?

Retail stores, restaurants, workplaces, hospitality, transportation, education, exhibition and entertainment spaces will all have different roles to play. *Clarity* about the specific reasons they are better than a virtual alternatives will be paramount. The meaning behind the physical space sets the stage for a new strategic intent and the development of the foundational principles which will guide the design of both the hardware, software and spatial aspects of the next generation of environments.

## EXPERIENCE PRINCIPLE

A guiding precept which helps shape *how* the functional and/or emotional aspects of an interaction should be conceived, designed or operated to ensure the desired outcome is achieved

# Start. Stop. Continue.

As you embark on the development of these new environments, an evaluation of what should be done differently in the space today is the next important step. An evaluative exercise based on the new strategic role of the space, gathered insights and deeper understanding of what is most important can help identify high-level changes, adaptations or new requirements:

**START: What new functions, services or physical elements should the space contain that are not part of the current design?**

**STOP: What functions, services or physical elements of the current model should no longer be part of the experience?**

**CONTINUE: What functions, services or physical elements of the current model should be kept as part of the experience?**

As part of this evaluation, we recommend a “teardown” of current thinking, processes, approaches and technologies. One must question “the way we’ve always done it,” to define the ambition for evolution or reinvention.

These activities set the stage for reimagining the spaces and experiences for the future; how they will be designed and, operated, and potentially jumpstart the transformation that was needed even before the current crisis.

# Next Generation Experiences

Our work with some of the biggest and fastest growing brands today has taught us the next generation of experiences will be guided by four principles:

## Recognize Me

Know who I am, what my relationship is with you and what matters to me.

## Respond to Me

Treat me as an individual, personalize the experience or use the experience to personalize the product or service it delivers.

Offer me relevant products and services I prefer or anticipate what I might need—or want—based on what you know about me.

## Reward Me

Give me special benefits for my loyalty, frequent interactions and, especially, for sharing my data.

This means more than “points,” but also recognition and special access to things and other experiences I would not be able to get if not for my interactions with you.

## Respect Me

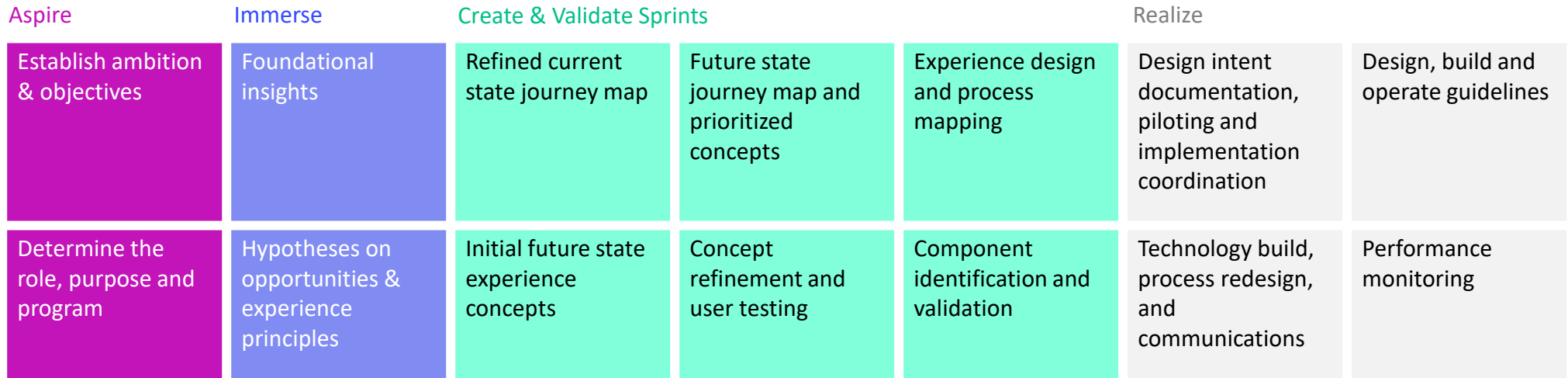
Respect my time, treat me like a human—even if I am being served by a machine; keep my data safe...and now a new imperative: Keep me safe.

It is our belief the next generation of **shared spaces** will be shaped by these dimensions as well as with sensors and computer vision technology that can recognize you and provide information, functionality and access based on “who” you are, anticipate your needs based on environmental and personal data, and enable **richer human connections** while minimizing transactional or lower value-added interactions.



# Space Design as Service Design

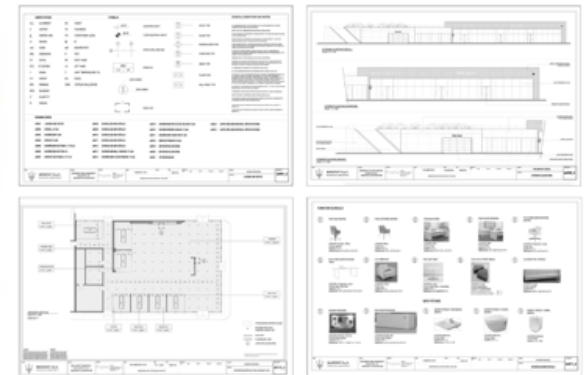
We take a human-centric approach to envisioning better ways—and places—for helping people “get jobs done.” It is a strategic way of organizing and stitching together the gaps across people, technologies and touchpoints to create a unified and transformational experience.



Our integrated team of **strategy consultants, data & insights specialists, architects, and interior, industrial and UX designers**, work together with the client team to develop a deep understanding of behavioral drivers, strategy and experience principles, which are translated into actionable designs for testing, implementation and operation.

# End-to-End Design

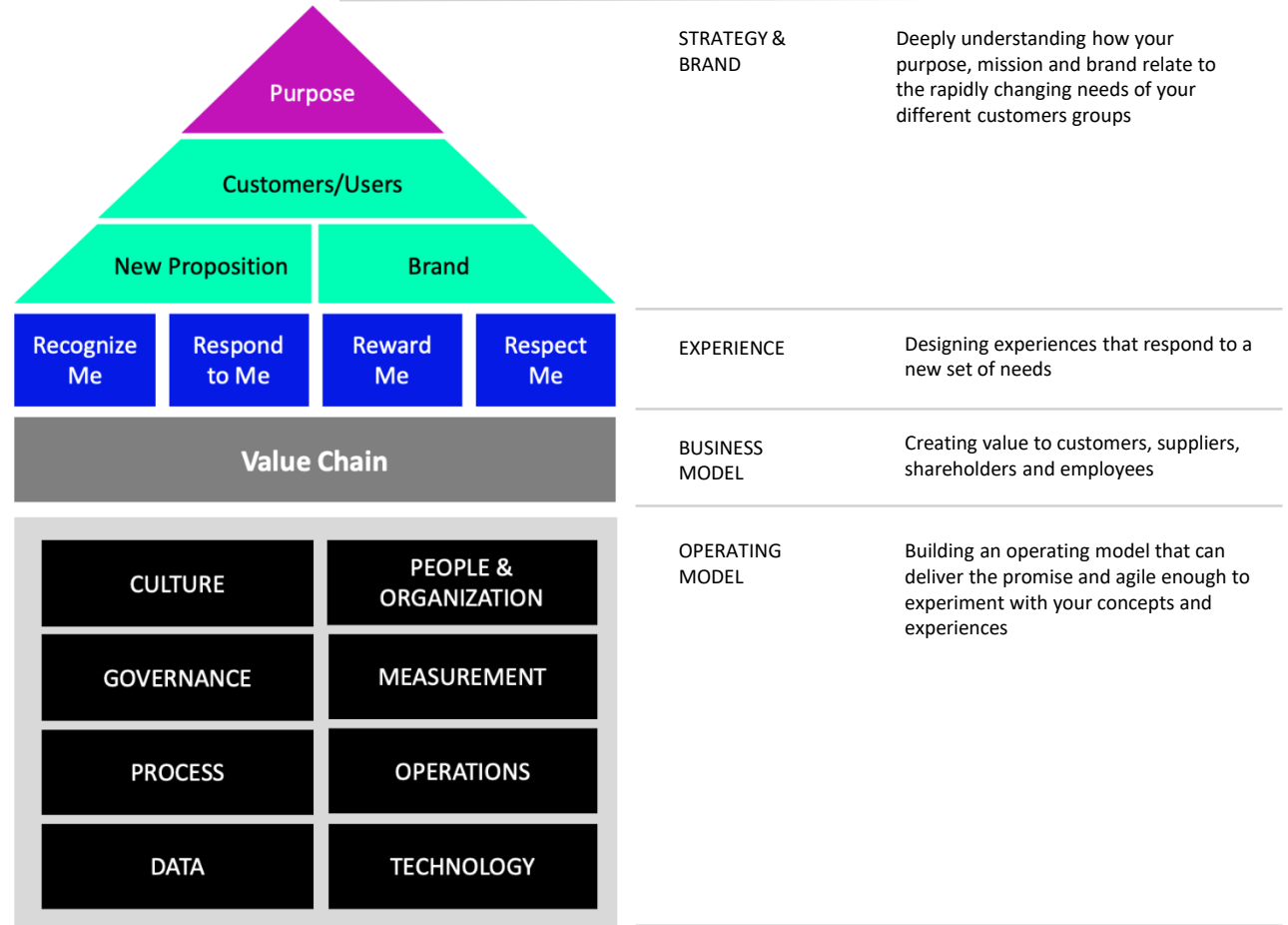
We can take on the work from helping to set the ambition, developing the crucial insights and understanding of behavioral drivers, establishing the experience principles, to conceptualizing and designing the physical and digital aspects of the environment.



# Making it Happen

We will create and evaluate new designs and develop plans to enable your business to test new concepts quickly and efficiently against a clear set of measures. We will *make it happen* by guiding you through the implications for data and technology, supply chain, store operations, people and culture, measurement and incentives.

## A new operating model for shared spaces



# Thank you

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