BOOK ONE • THE GUEST'S PERSPECTIVE

WORKING DRAFT / TEXT, IMAGES AND DESIGN IN DEVELOPMENT

For you, it's routine.



For your guest, it's their first time.

Guest experience and service design —
from your guest's perspective to your next shift.

Oscar Lindeberg

SCHOOL OF SERVICE

A book for the people on the floor.

There is a moment in almost every shift when the plan meets real life.

A guest arrives early. Someone calls in sick. A colleague needs help. The coffee machine chooses this exact moment to develop a personality.

You make decisions. Small ones, mostly. Who to help first. What to explain. When to ask a question. Whether to solve something yourself or find someone who can.

Those decisions shape someone else’s day.

Start with something you recognise.

I wanted to write something about that work. The attention it takes. The things that make it difficult. The satisfaction of getting it right.

These stories are imagined, but you may recognise the situations. Perhaps you have been the guest. Perhaps you have been the person searching for the manager.

As you read, think about your own workplace.

What do guests find confusing? What does your team keep having to rescue? Where would a little preparation make a big difference?

Pick something you recognise. Talk about it with a colleague.

Then try one thing on your next shift.

Oscar

You're at work. Someone else is celebrating their birthday.

At table seven, someone has been looking forward to tonight for weeks.

At reception, someone is trying to look relaxed while worrying about the booking.

By the entrance, someone is wondering whether they are in the right place.



For them, it is the beginning.

You can't know everyone's story by looking at them.

But you can leave room to discover it.

A greeting. A question. A moment to listen before moving on.

For you, this may be the fourth arrival in ten minutes.

For them, it is the beginning.



What is service design?

Think about the last time you were a guest somewhere.

Before you arrived, you needed information. Perhaps you checked opening times, compared options or made a booking.

Once there, you needed to know where to go, what to expect and who could help.

Someone had made decisions about all of those things.

You experienced how well they worked together.

Make the experience work together.

Service design means understanding that experience and deliberately designing how people, information, spaces and ways of working come together to make it happen.

It starts with listening to guests and the team.

Then we try a change, see what happens and improve it.

That might mean making a booking clearer, preparing a new colleague, improving a handover or giving someone permission to solve a problem.

Often, it begins with something surprisingly ordinary.

“Why do guests keep asking us that?”

Follow the guest. Look behind the moment.

A guest arrives and someone welcomes them.

That welcome is the part they see.

Behind it are a shift plan, a clear entrance, a working booking system and a colleague who knows what to do when three people arrive together.

A warm welcome becomes easier when those things work.

When they don’t, even a brilliant colleague can struggle.

Both sides matter.

GUEST

Can I find what I need? Do I know what happens next? Can someone help me?

TEAM

Do we know who is doing what? Do we have the information, time and permission we need?

We need both perspectives.

And we need to look beyond the moment itself.

BEFORE / What can we prepare?
DURING / What needs our attention?
AFTER / What can we learn?

Let’s start with dinner.

The starter that stayed on the menu.

It’s Friday evening. Table seven is finally out for dinner.

It took a babysitter, three changes to the booking and a small disagreement about parking.

But they made it.

One of them is looking at the starters.





Across the room, Alex is looking for a clean wine glass.

Alex has been working here for three weeks. Friendly, willing, still learning.

Tonight, a colleague is off sick and almost every table arrived at once.

The advice at the briefing was brief.

TEAM

“Let’s really focus on sales tonight.”

Alex nodded. So did everyone else.



GUEST

“I could have done with a little help choosing.”

At table seven, the guest orders a main course.

Alex writes it down.

“Lovely. Thank you.”

And leaves.

The guest closes the menu.

They were interested in a starter. They just weren’t sure whether it would be too much food.



TEAM

“I could have done with a little help knowing what to suggest.”

Alex would have liked to make a suggestion.

But which starter? What if the kitchen was too busy? And wouldn’t asking sound a bit pushy?

There is no complaint from table seven.

The food is good. The bill is paid.

Later, the manager checks the figures.

“We need to sell more starters.”

Alex has heard that before.

Neither of them says any of this.

Before the next shift.

The team leader brings out one of the starters.

They taste it. Talk about the portion. Ask the kitchen how long it takes.

Someone asks what to recommend to a guest who wants something small.

Alex was wondering that too.

Then they try a question aloud.

“Are you thinking about a starter, or going straight to mains?”

It feels slightly awkward in the staff room.

Most things do when colleagues are watching you pretend to take an order.

They try it again.



This time, Alex knows the answer.

The team leader explains the purpose: understand what the guest wants, then help them choose.

A guest who wants only a main course is easy to help too.

Later, a guest looks between two parts of the menu.

Alex asks the question.

“We’re tempted. Is this one quite big?”

This time, Alex knows the answer.

At the next table, the answer is different.

“Just mains, thanks. We’ve got a train to catch.”

“Of course. Let me check the timings for you.”

The question helps both tables.



The same wait. Two different experiences.

Maya is at reception, helping a guest change a booking.

The phone rings. She lets it ring.

Another guest arrives and waits a few steps away.

Maya notices them.

She wants to finish the change correctly. One more screen. One more detail.

The waiting guest checks their confirmation.

Then the signs.

Then the confirmation again.



GUEST

“Am I even waiting in the right place?”

TEAM

“I know you’re there. I’ll be with you as soon as I can.”

Maya hasn’t said what she is thinking.

The guest has no way of knowing.

One uncertainty has gone.

Maya looks up.

“Hi. You’re in the right place for check-in. I’m finishing this booking, then I’ll help you.”

The guest puts their phone away.

The wait continues, but one uncertainty has gone.

Later, Maya mentions that arrivals often stop in the same place and look around.

The team leader watches the entrance during the next busy period.

A better arrival.

The check-in sign is easy to see from behind the desk.

From the entrance, a plant is doing an excellent job of hiding it.

They move the sign.

They also agree who will greet arrivals when reception is occupied, and when to call for help.

Over the next few shifts, they watch whether guests still look lost and how long the queue gets.

A greeting helps the person waiting now. A clearer arrival helps the people coming next.

“But I already told someone.”

The guest has booked two rooms for a family visit.

They called yesterday to explain that their mother would need a step-free route.

The colleague on the phone was helpful.

“Of course. I’ll make a note.”

At check-in, the receptionist searches the booking.

There is a note.

“Family coming. Please assist.”

The guest explains again.



GUEST

“I thought we had sorted this out.”

TEAM

“I wish I had known before you arrived.”

Behind them, their mother is standing with a walking stick.

The receptionist wants to help. They need to check which room and route will work.

“Bear with me. I’ll ask my colleague.”

The guest hears one promise.

The team sees a phone call, a booking note, a room allocation and a shift change.

The guest experiences how those parts join up.

The receptionist finds a suitable arrangement and explains the route. They offer a seat while it is checked.

Afterwards, the team follows the promise back through the process.

Where should an access requirement be recorded?

Who checks it before arrival?

Who confirms what the team can provide?

Let the promise travel.

They agree on a clear place for the details and a person responsible for checking the arrangement.

Sensitive information stays limited to what colleagues need to provide the service.

Before the next arrival, the receptionist has what they need.

The family can begin their visit.

The guest should be able to trust that a promise will travel further than the person who made it.

Before the candles.

A family arrives for a birthday dinner.

There is a cake waiting in the kitchen. Candles, plates, everything ready.

As Sam takes the drinks order, one of the guests quietly mentions that their father has left his reading glasses at home.

He has been holding the menu at several optimistic distances.

Sam checks with him.

“Would a pair of reading glasses help? We keep a few at reception.”



They would.

A moment later, he can read the menu himself.

He takes his time.

Then asks about the fish.

The cake will arrive later, as planned.

GUEST

The first thoughtful part of the evening has already happened.

Care begins with attention.

Sam didn’t need to invent a grand gesture.

Someone mentioned a difficulty. Sam listened and knew a useful way to help.

Personal hospitality can begin there.

The question for a leader is practical:

What helps our team respond when they notice something?

Colleagues need to know what is available, what they can decide and when to bring someone else in.

Make it possible.

GUEST

“They paid attention to what mattered to us.”

TEAM

“I knew how I could help.”

Sam knew where the glasses were. They were clean, ready to use and available without a search for approval.

In another situation, the right response might require a manager, a cost decision or a safety check.

Those boundaries should be clear before the room gets busy.

And afterwards, the team needs space to share what they noticed.

Good ideas are easier to use when someone has made them possible.

Give people a chance to succeed.

Before opening, the team gathers for a few minutes.

There are two new colleagues tonight. A large group is arriving at seven. One item is unavailable.

The team leader keeps the briefing useful.

Who will welcome the group?

What does each new colleague need help with?

What should guests know about the menu?

Who can step in when someone gets stuck?



Keep the plan alive.

During the shift, the plan will need attention.

The team leader watches the room, checks with colleagues and moves support where it is needed.

The manager has a longer view: staffing, equipment, training, information and decisions that keep causing delays.

The employee sees the details of the encounter: the repeated question, the confused look, the suggestion that helped.

Each role has something the others need.

A good shift gives that information somewhere to go.

Before everyone goes home.

The team is tired.

Someone has already put their coat on.

This is a good reason to keep the conversation short.

“What made things difficult tonight?”

“What helped?”

“What should we change before tomorrow?”



Make the next shift better.

Alex mentions that several guests asked whether the starter could be shared.

They agree to make that clearer on the menu.

The team leader takes responsibility for checking the wording with the manager and kitchen.

Alex knows what will happen next.

Tomorrow’s briefing starts with the update.

Over the next few shifts, the team checks whether the change helps. They notice the questions guests ask, discuss confidence in recommending and review starter orders.

If sales change, they also consider guest numbers and what else was different.

Choose a measure that helps you decide what to do next.

Then use it.

One moment. One change. Then learn.

You have already seen the method in these stories.

A guest hesitates.

A colleague struggles.

The same question comes up again.

That is somewhere to begin.



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

A way forward.

01 **SEE**
Choose a real moment in the guest's experience.

02 **ASK**
Understand what is happening for the guest and the team.

03 **PREPARE**
Make one change possible.

04 **ACT**
Try it during a real shift.

05 **LEARN**
Check what changed. Adjust and try again.

Work through it together.

Start small enough to learn something useful on the next few shifts.

From "sell more" to something useful.

SEE

Guests hesitate over the starters. Alex takes the main-course order and moves on.

Choose that moment: helping a guest who is unsure.

ASK

What are guests unsure about?

What does Alex need to feel confident helping them?

Listen to guests and colleagues. Check your assumptions.

Try it. Learn. Try again.

PREPARE

Taste the dish. Confirm portions and timings. Practise a helpful question.

The manager protects preparation time. The team leader organises the trial. Colleagues contribute what they know.

ACT

Ask, listen and respond to the answer.

A guest can choose a starter, ask another question or happily go straight to mains.

LEARN

What did guests ask? Did colleagues feel more confident? What happened to orders?

Make sharing options clearer. Keep practising. Review again.

The first attempt gives you something to learn from.

Choose something your team recognises.

THE MOMENT WE WANT TO IMPROVE

Where does it happen in the guest's experience?

WHAT WE KNOW

What have guests said or done? What has the team noticed?

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO ASK

Who can help us understand the situation?

THE CHANGE WE WILL TRY

Keep it specific enough that everyone knows what to do.

YOUR NEXT SHIFT

Make a small plan.

WHAT WE NEED BEFORE WE BEGIN

Information, time, equipment, training or permission?

WHO WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Name someone who can keep the trial moving and bring back what the team learns.

HOW WE WILL KNOW WHETHER IT HELPS

Choose one guest signal, one team observation, and, if needed, a simple operational metric.

WHEN WE WILL REVIEW IT

Pick a shift or date.

You should be able to explain the plan in a short conversation before work starts.

Someone will arrive tomorrow.

They may have a question they don’t know how to ask.

They may be celebrating something.

They may simply want a coffee and a quiet place to sit.

You won’t know everything about their day.

You can notice them. Help them understand what happens next. Ask when you need to know more.

And together, your team can make those moments easier to get right.

Clearer information.
A better handover.
A little practice.
Permission to help.

For you, it’s routine. For your guest, it’s their first time.

Oscar Lindeberg

SCHOOL OF SERVICE

School of Service helps organisations improve guest experiences by connecting service design, leadership and everyday operations.

This book is an invitation to look closely at the encounters you already have - and work together on what could make them better.

Bring one situation to the conversation.

schoolofservice.se

Direct-flash layout draft / November 2026
Book format: 170 × 230 mm (portrait).
Fictional stories. AI-generated image proposals.
Not a print production file.