Model

Good services principles

A list of fifteen principles that describe how a good service behaves for the person using it, from finding it to getting help from a human.



In Spanish
Principios de un buen servicio

Origin
Lou Downe (2020)

What problem it addresses

Gives the team a shared, concrete standard to judge a whole service, not just a screen or a channel, and to spot where it breaks.

Components

Easy to find
People who need it can reach it without knowing in advance what it is called.

Explains its purpose
Makes clear from the start what it does and how it works.

Sets expectations
States what is required, what it costs, how long it takes and who can use it.

Lets people reach their goal
People finish what they came to do, from start to end, without breaks.

Works in familiar ways
Follows the useful conventions people already expect.

Needs no prior knowledge
Uses words that a first-time user understands.

Independent of internal structure
People do not have to know or navigate the organisation's departments.

Asks for the fewest steps
Asks for just enough and anticipates what will be needed.

Consistent throughout
Looks, feels and speaks the same across every channel.

No dead ends
Leads everyone to a clear outcome, including those who are not eligible.

Equally usable by everyone
Works whatever each person's abilities or circumstances.

Encourages the right behaviours
Nudges users and staff to act well and does not reward poor service.

Responds quickly to change
When someone's situation changes, it reflects it promptly across all channels.

Explains its decisions
Says why something was decided and how to challenge it.

Makes it easy to reach a person
Offers a simple route to human help when it is needed.

How it works

1 

Review the service walked through from end to end, principle by principle.

2 

Failures the points where people get lost, stuck or give up.

3 

Improvements prioritised changes to what harms the people using the service most.

Applications in design

Use it like this
Go through the fifteen principles to assess an existing service or to set the criteria for a new one with the whole team.

Avoid
Using them only to review the digital part; they apply to the whole service, with its channels and its staff.

Don't fall for it
It is a model born from practice, without empirical validation: use it to review and talk, not to measure.

Connections

Used in

- Journey map
- Service blueprint

Related to

- User experience honeycomb
- Touchpoint

Authors and works

2020	**Lou Downe**	Gathered the fifteen principles in a book, drawing on their work as head of design at the UK Government Digital Service (GDS).

Sources

Original sources

- Downe, L. (2020). Good services: How to design services that work. BIS Publishers.

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