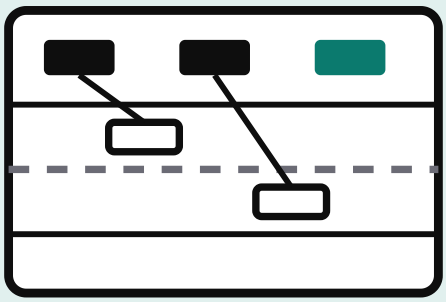
Artifact

Service blueprint

A diagram that shows, step by step, the actions of the person, of frontstage and backstage staff, the support processes, and the physical evidence of a service.



Origin

Shostack (1982, 1984); Bitner, Ostrom, and Morgan (2008)

What it's for

Understanding, designing, and improving a complete service, connecting the experience with the operation that supports it.

Key elements

Physical evidence

What the person sees or touches at each step.

Customer actions

What the person does throughout the service.

Frontstage and backstage

What staff do, in view and out of view.

Support processes

Internal systems and departments that make it possible.

Three lines

The line of interaction separates the person from visible staff; the line of visibility, what is seen from what is not; and the line of internal interaction, staff from support processes.

An example

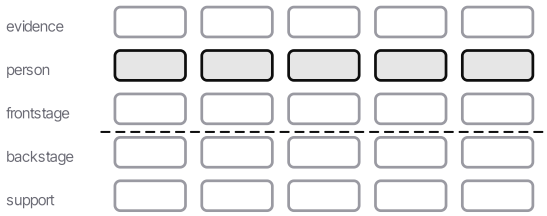
Two ways of mapping a night at a hotel.

Only the journey



Booking, arriving, checking in, sleeping, and leaving. **You see the experience.**

Blueprint



Under each step, what visible staff do, what happens behind the scenes, and the systems involved. **You see what supports it.**

The blueprint shows where the service can fail before the guest notices.

How it's done

1

Lay out the person's steps from start to finish.

2

Under each step, add what happens in front and behind.

3

That reveals the failure points and dependencies.

Applications in design

When to use it

When a service breaks down between departments, or before changing one that involves many people and systems.

Avoid

Making it so detailed that no one can read it: start with the key steps.

Don't fall for it

Build it with people from each department and validate it against real operations: what procedures say is not always what happens.

Connections

Builds on

- Service evidence
- Frontstage and backstage
- Gaps model of service quality
- Good services principles
- Touchpoint

Used by

- Experience design
- Service design
- Service innovation
- Service design research

Related to

- Mystery shopping
- Journey map
- Ecosystem map
- Desktop walkthrough

Authors and works

1982, 1984	**G. Lynn Shostack**	Proposed the blueprint as a tool for designing services (1982) and spread it in Harvard Business Review (1984).
2008	**Mary Jo Bitner, Amy Ostrom, and Felicia Morgan**	Updated it as a practical technique for service innovation.

Sources

Original sources

- Shostack, G. L. (1982). How to design a service. European Journal of Marketing, 16(1), 49–63. View source (https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000004799)
- Shostack, G. L. (1984). Designing services that deliver. Harvard Business Review, 62(1), 133–139. View source (https://hbr.org/1984/01/designing-services-that-deliver)

Academic reviews

- Bitner, M. J., Ostrom, A. L., & Morgan, F. N. (2008). Service blueprinting: A practical technique for service innovation. California Management Review, 50(3), 66–94. View source (https://doi.org/10.2307/41166446)

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026

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