SERVICE DESIGN PORTFOLIO

CURIOSITY ZONE, VIRGINIA

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

START DATE: 02 OCTOBER, 2020

PROJECT LEADER: PRADEEP GUNDA

1. Research

My child goes to Curiosity Zone, an after care program who picks up young children from the elementary schools and engage children with fun filled science experiments and activities. Although parents are satisfied with the overall service offerings of the Curiosity Zone but they think few things can be improved. My task was to do research the service experiences of Curiosity Zone's customers and identify the areas where they can fix the pain points and improve the joy points of their customers.

Being one of the parents who send their child to Curiosity zone after school program, it made me easy to talk to other parents and Curiosity Zone's staff members to identify the problems and the possible solutions to fix those problems to improve the service. The secondary research also helped me to identify the problem with 'wait times' to pick the children after a long work day. As a result, I got various opinions, feedbacks and suggestions from the parents about the problems they are facing, and what they are expecting to improve or fix. Most of the parents think the service improvements will be very helpful and are happy to continue sending their children to Curiosity Zone.

The pain points that I have identified in the research:

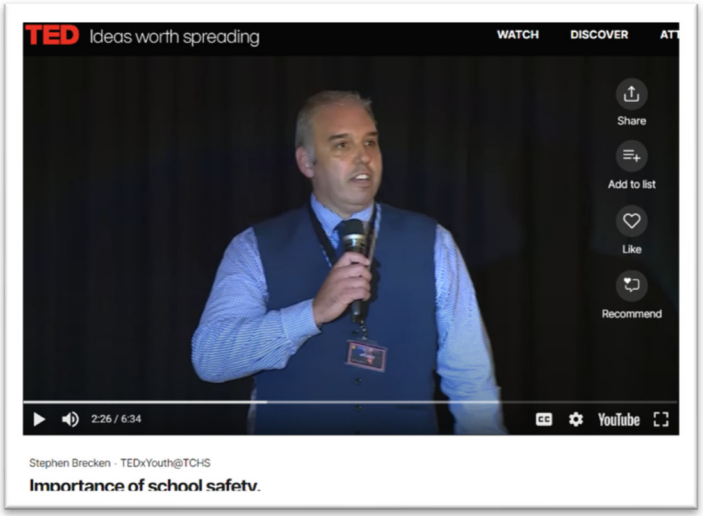
1. Some parents are stressful to not know if the child has been safely picked up from the school.
2. Activities take longer time sometimes which makes parents to wait when they come to pick up their kids after a long working day.

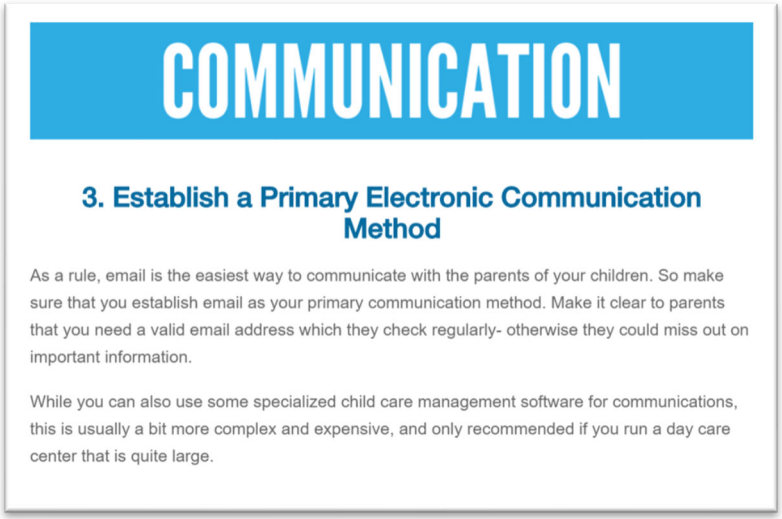
Overall goal of the project:

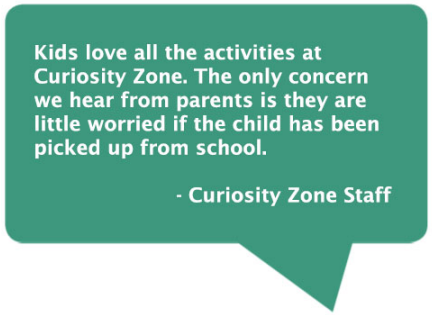
1. Design a plan/process to inform the parents when Curiosity Zone picks up the children from school.
2. Design a plan/process to avoid the wait time for parents during the evening pickup. This helps parents to take care of other errands in the meanwhile.

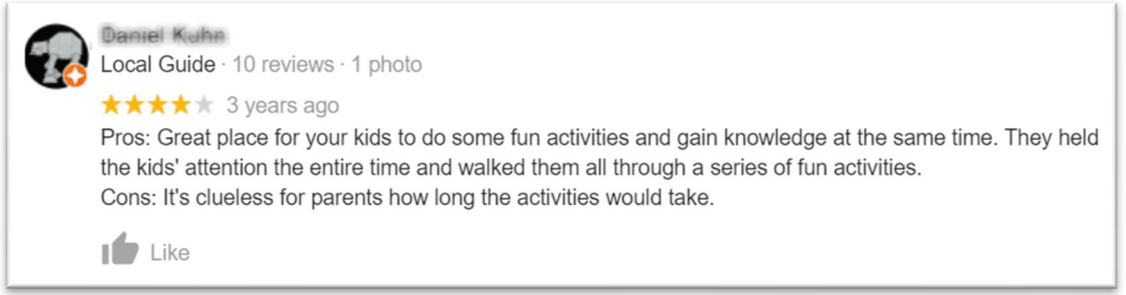
Figure 1: Curiosity Zone - Customer Empathy Map

With this research task, I learned to see the problems from multiple perspectives using different research methods. I also learned the importance of divergent thinking style when doing research. I believe that the knowledge I gained about multiple research methods will help me at my workplace to suggest better solutions to our clients who come for web development solutions.









Screenshots and notes of research activities: Some websites suggesting safety tips for schools and child care centers; over-the-phone suggestions and Google review.

2. Define

In the define stage, I have organized and synthesized the research to generate an actionable problem statement.

“Ryan is worried if his daughter has been picked up safely by Curiosity Zone after the school. He also feels uncomfortable waiting at the center to pick up his daughter. He wants to make use of that time for something else in case of delay in acitivities.“

I did more indepth analysis of the parents with the help of customer journey map. I have also did stake holder analysis in terms of who are internal stake holders, external stakeholders and what are the impacts of this new solution to each one of the stake holders involved in the service. Below is the customer journey map of Curiosity Zone.

During this define phase lessons and tasks, I learned the importance of the tools like Journey mapping, value maps, ecosystem maps, and stakeholder maps in the service design process. I learned the importance of having a good problem statement which focuses on unmet need written from user’s point of view. It also helps explain to stakeholders and team members exactly what we are trying to achieve.

I believe I can use this knowledge in my workplace to identify who the customers are, what are the needs and goals to define the right problem statements for our clients. Sometimes, we come across the situations in our work process where the client expectations are not fully understood at the initial phases that leads to many iterations and pain points for our clients in the later stages of the project. It is also a challenge for us to deliver the right solutions if we miss the right problems and expectations of our clients. I think this knowledge will be very helpful in our organization to identify the ‘right problems’ upfront, and we can make sure that we get the right solution to solve the user needs at the end of the process.

Figure 2: Customer Journey Map - Curiosity Zone

3. Ideate

After defining the problem statement and building customer journey map, I came up with several ideas as a part of Brainstorming process (Figure 3). In order to make sense of the ideas that I cocreated with some help of other parents, I have grouped the ideas according to similarity or affinity. The categories that I ended up with included ideas that involves technology, voluntary, and additional resources/time. The ideas were further arranged under those categories (Figure 4). Then, I have selected the final ideas considering several aspects like the cost, resources and time that Curiosity Zone wants to spend additional to what they are doing now. The ideas that I scrapped either exceed their budget, require more resources or time which CZ doesn't want to spend at this point.

The initial ideas:

1. App that sends updates to parents when driver pickups
2. App that sends notifications about activities
3. CZ provides GPS tracker for kids. This requires more budget
4. One parent volunteer each day at school during pickup
5. CZ staff manually messages parents once students arrive center
6. One of the parents sends group message when activities are done
7. Arrangements to engage parents during wait time
8. CZ staff calls when activities are completed

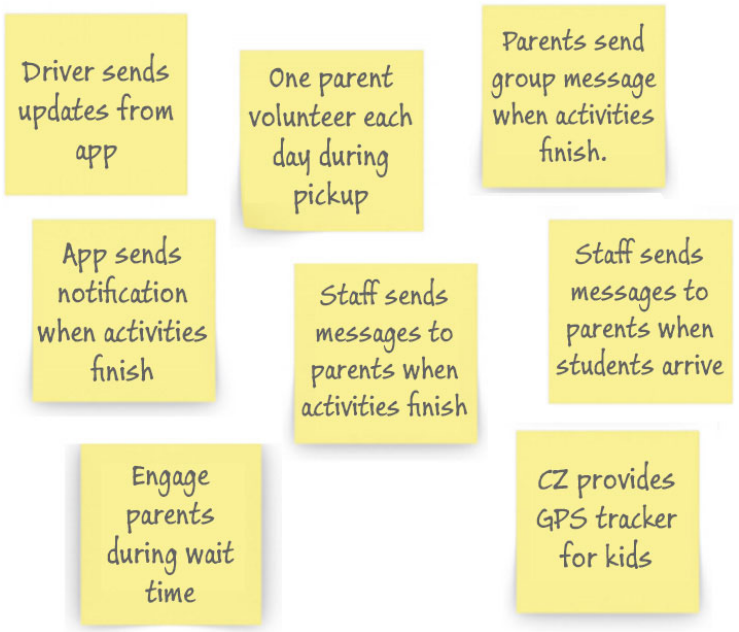


Figure 3: Initial Ideas

The finalized ideas:

1. **App with updates about pickup and dropoff at center:** Driver uses app to take attendance which sends auto notifications to parents' phones with a simple attendance check.

2. **App with notifications about activities:** Staff should be able to mark the day as 'done' in the App which sends notifications to all the parents that the activities are finished and their child is ready to pickup from the center.

Figure 4: Cluster Ideas

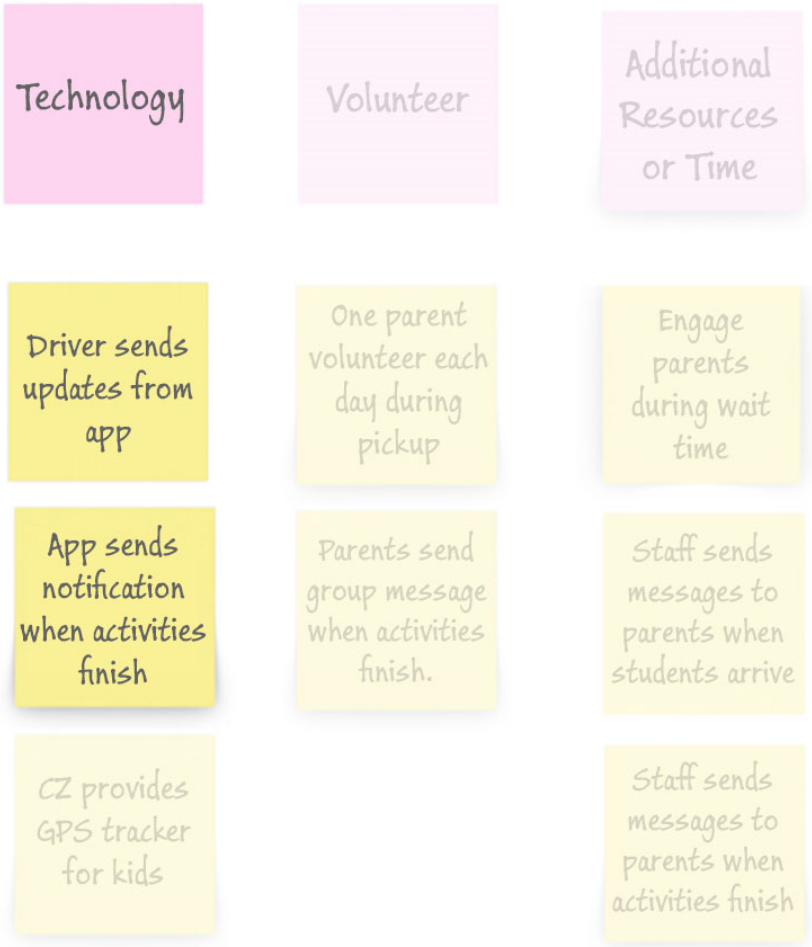


Figure 5: Selected Ideas

In this ideation phase, I learned that Ideation requires a divergent thinking style to generate lots of creative and innovative ideas. I learned about the importance of lateral thinking to generate creative ideas, brainstorming the ideas, co-create with stakeholders and customers through group ideation, uses of affinity mapping technique and SCAMPER.

One of the useful processes that I can start using in our organization is '**Nominal Group Thinking**' process which I think we missed all these days. There are definitely few extraverts who always dominate the group sessions. Using the silent brainstorming and round robin process, I think we can get more ideas from all the team members who otherwise would hesitate to come forward.

4. Prototype

After finalizing the ideas, I built some low fedility protypes with hand drawings and illustrations describing the service experience of the parents with the new solution. When doing the prototype, I have also used the Business Model Canvas tool to identify customer segments, value proposition, customer relationships, key activites, key partnerships, cost structure and revenue streams of Curiosity Zone. This helped me to understand their backstage operations better apart from the already known frontstage services. It also helped me to understand the emotional aspects of the service design.

With the prototyping phase, I learned about different methods of prototyping to define a service or product. The prototypes in service design helps to explain wider, more holistic context of how services and products are experienced and used. I learned the importance of creating visual prototypes which helps the stakeholders to understand the service experience better. I learned about physical and digital prototypes, experience prototypes, low fedility and high fedility prototypes, evaluation protypes like Business Model Canvas.

I found that Business Model Canvas is very useful tool for evaluating the prototypes. I am looking forward to use BMC and other applicable prototyping methods in my organization which can be really useful to create a shared language for designers and managers from different functional areas to talk about new service concepts in our organization.

Below is the service prototype I created with different touch points of the Curiosity Zone's parents showing the intended service experience after implementing the new service ideas.

Figure 6: Service Prototype

5. Testing

I think this idea requires a high fedility prototype to do real time user testing or beta testing for the application to get the right feedback that improves the service. So far, I did the testing with the help of some low fedility prototypes that I built including the one above (figure 6). I have involved some of the parents to get feedback on the service prototype sketches and ran it through one of the CZ staff members to make sure this idea works in the real time. The idea has been received well by the staff but still determining the scale of project and cost structure that makes sense to invest in the application. Once the cost structure and the budget of the project is determined, we are planning to build a high fedility prototype with basic features that let us start testing in the real time. I learned that it is very important to test in person and observe the people using them. I am planning to observe the testing in real time, which helps to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the user experience and helps us make necessary changes to the service design.

In this process of discussing low fedility prototypes and planning for the real time testing of application, I learned it is important to involve all the stakeholders and get their insights. As there can be unanticipated challenges, involving them at this stage and making necessary improvements is very crucial for the success of service design. I also learned about tips fo getting solicited feedback using various testing methods. I learned the importance of using the methods like 'Six Thinking Hats', 'Feedback Capture Grid', and 'I like, I wish, What if' to get the right feedback, and open up possibilities for new ideas to explore in future iterations.

Moving forward, I am looking forward to use the knowledge I have gained about different testing methods at different levels and for different needs in my organization. As I work in an organization where we develop technology solutions, we use beta testing quite often but I see the value of integrating other testing methods as well, that I learned in this course.

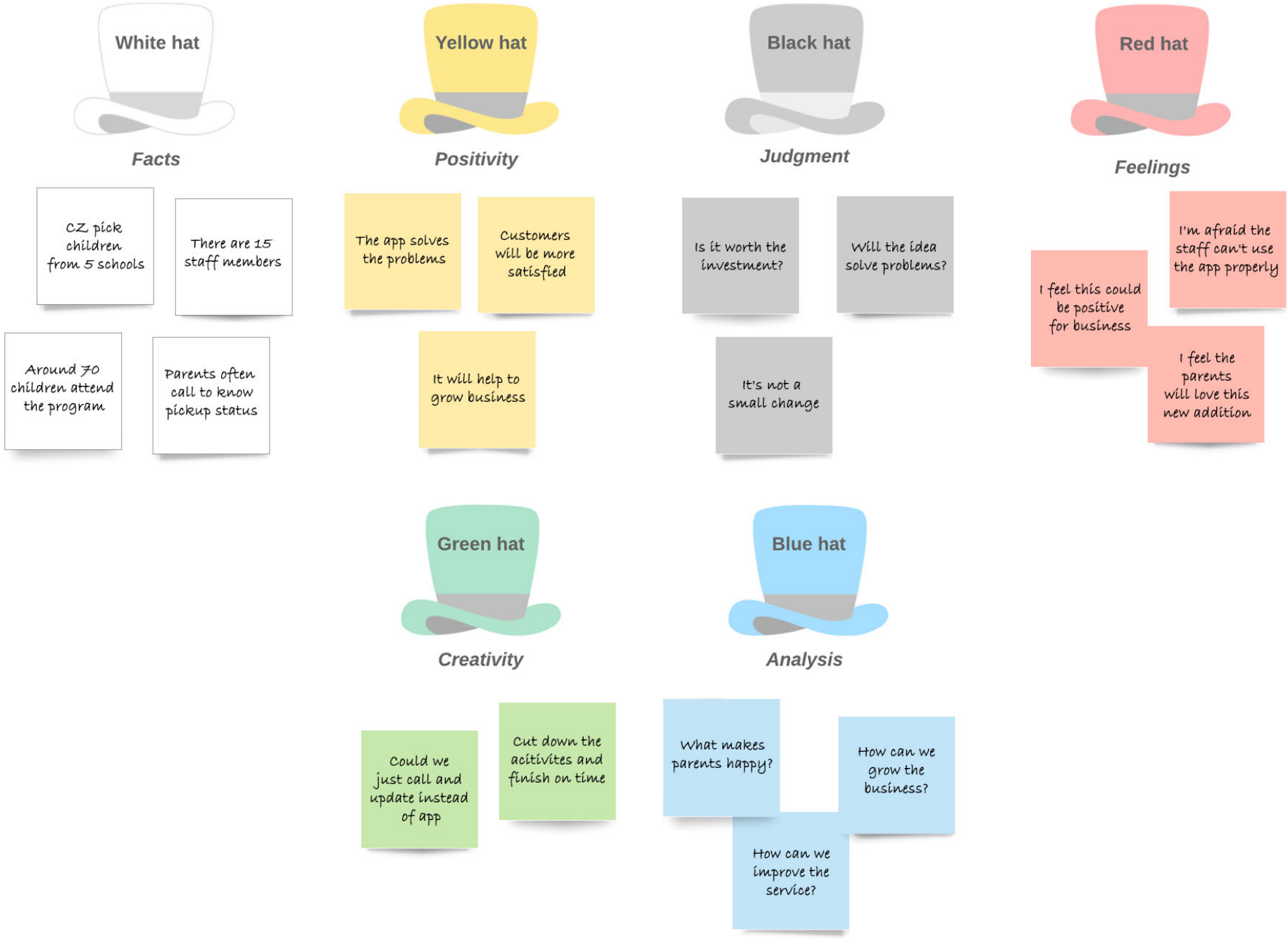


Figure 7: 'Six Thinking Hats' method for evaluating ideas

6. Implementation Plan

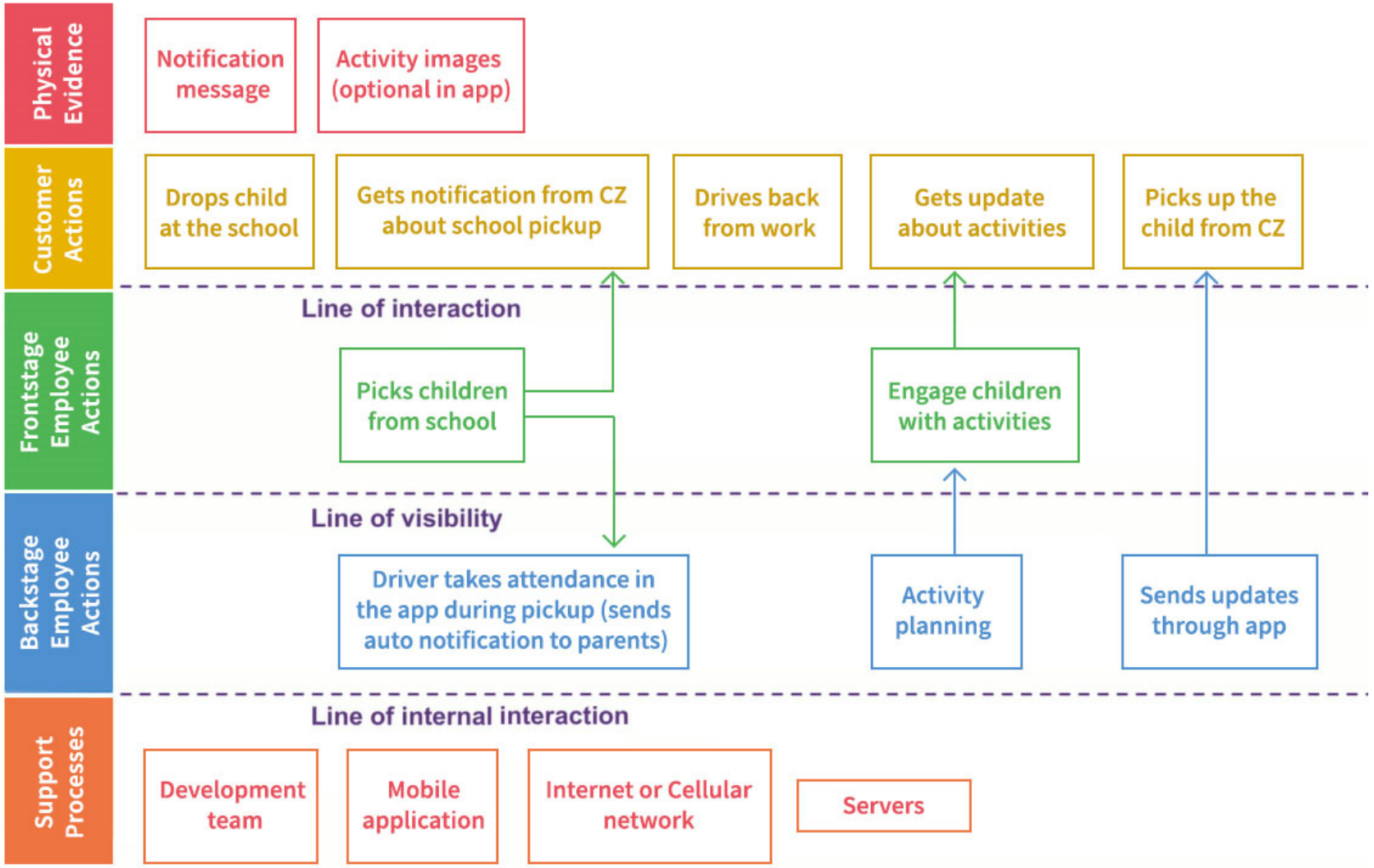


Figure 8: Service Blueprint

The plan for Implementation is to start with involving all the key stakeholders and finalizing the service prototype by making the improvements of high fedility prototype from testing phase, finish building the final product/app in the cost scale decided in the testing phase, make the necessary changes, and launch the app. Once the app is launched, the plan is to train the staff about how different features in the app works and support them until they feel comfortable using it. Once the app is ready, we need to continue testing the service design experience in real time for few more days to make any necessary changes, if required.

When implementing a service design, I learned it is very important to understand all the front-stage, back-stage and behind the scene processes of the business to deliver a high quality service. I have learned the importance of 'Service Blueprinting' tool to visualize the relationships between different service components, which can be very helpful to visually explain the service innovation to stakeholders.

I believe Service Blueprinting can be a useful tool that can be put in practice in our organization. We sometimes face mis-understandings and mis-communications with our clients during the initial stages of the project and in some cases it's difficult to explain the different processes that we are planning to our clients. I see Service Blueprinting can be a great tool to communicate better and keeps everyone on same page.