


# Designing ideas that survive risk-averse environments

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Design Matters 2026 , Tokyo, Japan

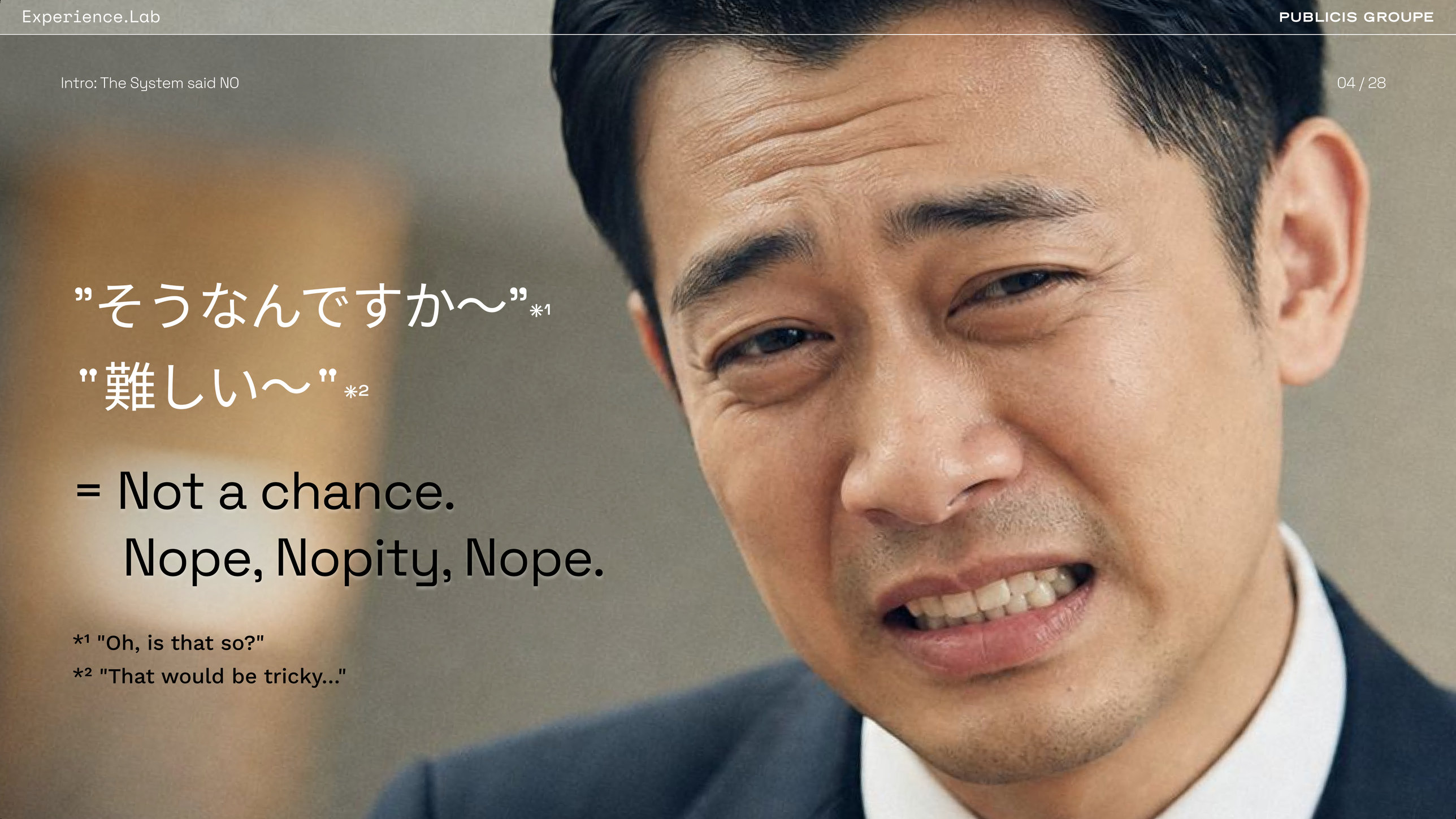
# Today we'll talk about:

INTRO: THE SYSTEM SAID NO 01
THE ANATOMY OF A NO 02
THE ANATOMY OF A YES 03
FROM NO TO YES 04

"This is a great idea...

# Has it ever been done before?”

-Client



”そうなんですか〜”*1

"難しい〜"*2

= Not a chance.
Nope, Nopity, Nope.

*1 "Oh, is that so?"

*2 "That would be tricky..."

# 02.
# The anatomy of a NO

Why good ideas encounter resistance, and what's actually driving it.

# What designers celebrate vs. What organizations fear



A designer’s pride & joy

Novelty

Disruption

Risk-taking



Can be an organization’s nightmare

Liability

Precedent

The unknown

# The same idea is valued differently depending on the context

There’s a structural gap between innovation culture and institutional logic.

02. The anatomy of a NO



**Incentives**

Who gets credit if it works, who gets blamed if it fails

**Accountability**

The person saying no is protecting their position, not blocking progress

**NO**

is rarely about the idea

**Legal & Compliance**

Real walls, real repercussions

**Precedent**

"We've never done this before"
"We have done something like this before"

# Caution is not a bug, It is a feature

# Japan as a case study in structured resistance

1 **High-context culture**

Consensus before agility. Decisions are collective, deliberate, and built on shared understanding.

2 **Ringisho-like approval**

Peer review · Horizontal consensus · Upward approval

Decisions move horizontally before they move up. Approval is earned through alignment, not authority.

3 **Institutionalized risk aversion**

Risk aversion is systemic, not personal. It is founded in benefits they value over pure agility, novelty, or individual reputation.

# And yet... innovation happens

Well within change-resistant systems

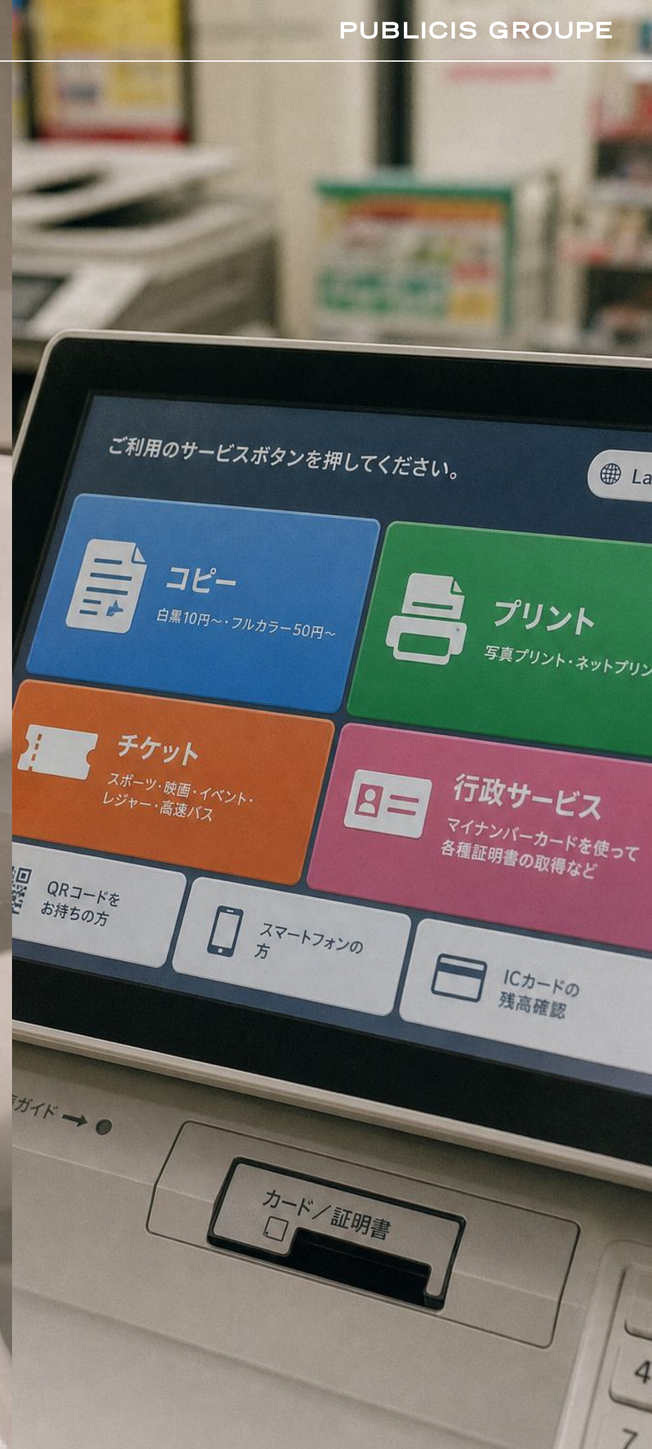
# 03.
# The anatomy of a YES

Designing within change-resistant systems








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レジャー・高速バス
行政サービス
マイナンバーカードを使って
各種証明書の取得など
QRコードを
お持ちの方
スマートフォンの
方
ICカードの
残高確認
カード／証明書




# It all started in a crowded city-hall waiting room...

From counters to smart copy machines.

02.The anatomy of a YES

# The “YES” moment




## Smart, multi-function copy machines

Local and central government needed to provide documents in a simpler, more accessible way. Multi-function machines placed in convenience stores became the introduced, true and tested service channel users were already familiar with.

# Innovative design that gets a YES define & claim their place in a system

## User needs: a non-negotiable

A product can only be useful to the system if it **meets the core user needs** it set out to meet

## Context-defined products

A “YES” is earned when a product clearly **declares the system it will exist within, and how** it will exist in it, as part of its product definition

## Evolution, not reinvention

Innovation is accepted when it **enhances the system** without fundamentally changing it.

# 04.
# From NO to YES

In Practice: how to give innovation its best fighting chance in change-resistant systems

# There are many reasons that could fuel a NO...

**Legal risks**
Proposal pushes legal boundaries or falls into a grey area

**Unpredictable outcomes**
Lack of precedent makes consequences difficult to anticipate

**Financial constraints**
High costs, uncertain returns, or insufficient funding

**Misaligned incentives**
Nobody stands to gain enough to champion the idea

**Technical feasibility**
Existing technology cannot support the proposed solution

**Organizational politics**
Challenges existing authority or stakeholder interests

**Operational disruption**
Requires significant changes to established workflows

**Strategic misalignment**
Doesn't align with current business goals or priorities

**Reputational risks**
Potential failure could damage brand image or public trust

**Maintenance & scalability**
Long-term support or expansion cannot be guaranteed

# ...and many ways to turn it into a YES

**Legal risks**
Proposal pushes legal boundaries or falls into a grey area → Engage legal teams early and explore compliant alternatives

**Unpredictable outcomes**
Lack of precedent makes consequences difficult to anticipate → Run controlled pilots to gather evidence and reduce uncertainty

**Financial constraints**
High costs, uncertain returns, or insufficient funding → Estimate ROI, propose phased, lower-cost implementation

**Misaligned incentives**
Nobody stands to gain enough to champion the idea → Identify stakeholder benefits and create shared success metrics

**Technical feasibility**
Existing technology cannot support the proposed solution → Gather references and develop proof of concepts where possible

**Organizational politics**
Challenges existing authority or stakeholder interests → Build alliances early and involve key decision-makers

**Operational disruption**
Requires significant changes to established workflows → Map workflow impacts and propose gradual implementation

**Strategic misalignment**
Doesn't align with current business goals or priorities → Connect user benefits to existing business priorities

**Reputational risks**
Potential failure could damage brand image or public trust → Anticipate failure scenarios, reframe narrative + add mitigation plans

**Maintenance & scalability**
Long-term support or expansion cannot be guaranteed → Define ownership, support needs and sustainable growth plans

A bit of vulnerability:

# A real case that got told NO

# Turning DOOH pushes into interactive UX





# We all know how this went...

# Why NO was the right answer for the system

| | |
|---|---|
| Legal risks | Commercially-driven initiatives can not be perceived as providing health diagnosis. |
| New use of technology | DOOH points in Japan did not at that stage have an integration with HCI/Motion response. |
| Deployment | How do we bring it to life? What is the path to execution? Who will own the experience? |

What’s being rejected is the solution’s fit within a system, not the solution itself

# What could have turned a NO into a YES?

# Design the solution

# Design the story

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Legal risks | → | Re-positioning | Define & position your product correctly: In this case for awareness or education. |
| Use of tech | → | Case studies | Collect references and case studies that showcase similar implementations, POC if possible. |
| Deployment | → | ID Ops partners | Identify potential partners and a clear path to implementation and maintenance of the design. |

# The product IS the story

From A:

# User-aware Product definition

Tech-modified DOOH spots that deploy self-assessment tools for ATTR (cardiac disease) in heavy traffic locations.

To B:

# User & System-aware Product definition

DOOH activations, augmented via tried-and-tested motion-tracking tech to showcase interactive experiences for ATTR risk awareness in Lalaport shopping malls (highest density of target-users), in partnership with DOOH network owner Mitsui SP.

Understanding how to shift a NO into a yes is central to

# The designer’s new role

# What are designers who get a YES doing right?

## Contextual intelligence

Reading the room, the system, the moment, not just the user.

## Choosing constraints

Knowing which constraint to push against and which to work with.

## Making innovation viable

Not just imaginable, but realistically buildable and shippable.

# Thank you!

Wanna get in touch?
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