DRS 2016

Design + Research + Society

Future-Focused Thinking

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2016 Design Research Society
50th Anniversary Conference
27-30 June 2016, Brighton, UK

Proposed Workshop Title:
Using Analogous Research to Build Empathy & Unlock Problems
(For Beginners)

Keywords: research in practice, design thinking

1. Workshop Organiser/s

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2. Context of Workshop

Our contribution aims to expose participants to IDEO's practical design research approach, through an interactive workshop, using the conference venue and surrounding area as a site for research. Participants will learn to observe, empathise and problem-solve in new ways.

Design research at IDEO exists to *inspire and inform design*. We blend user research and context research to bring our clients and teams close to real human needs in new ways. Our toolkit of methodologies is constantly evolving to fit ever more complex and diverse design challenges.

During this workshop we'll be looking at empathy-building and analogous research approaches:
- Empathy exercises help us engage first hand with the emotional perspective of the people we are designing for
- Analogous research aims to inspire solutions by looking at the problem from a different angle or looking for situations where similar problems have been addressed
    - E.g. healthcare can learn a lot from the hospitality industry, and financial institutions can find inspiration in the world of personal fitness.

These techniques help us to quickly 'jump into' unfamiliar topic areas, inspire clients and design teams, and explore sensitive topics without tackling them head-on.

Addressing the conference question – *How can design research help frame and address the societal problems that face us?* – from IDEO's perspective, we will brief and prepare participants to conduct research activities using our approach, facilitate direct experience of the methodologies and close with a discussion about their experience and how the chosen methodology relates to practice.

Our workshop activities will build empathy and unlock problems around the topic of digital inclusion which is a topical societal challenge for citizens of Brighton and Hove. In October 2015, it was announced that "*Brighton & Hove City Council plans to invest 6 million over the next three years in its digital services*" [Bloomberg] as part of a programme named 'The Customer First in a Digital Age' [Council page | Full PDF report]. The programme aims to "*modernise how its services are delivered, improving customer satisfaction while reducing staffing costs and increasing staff productivity*" through good digital design and services.

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

1. Introduction to IDEO and how we use analogous research and empathy experiences in our methodology.
Intended outcome: By sharing concrete examples of our experiences and the impact it has on design, participants will find out how this approach can add value and complement other methodologies, and how it sits in our broader methodology of Design Thinking.

2. Ice breaker empathy-building challenge.
Intended outcome: Participants will experience first hand what it is like to be expected to upskill quickly at a particular activity. This will help them to build empathy with how less digitally literate people feel when told they have to use digital tools to complete a task.

3. Generate ideas in groups for analogous or empathy activities to explore digital illiteracy from new angles.
Intended outcome: Participants will learn how to reframe design challenges to ask questions that inspire them to think of new ways to explore the problem and think of specific activities to try.

4. Take part in one of three analogous and empathy-building exercises IDEO has set up.
Intended outcome: Participants will experience and observe first-hand what it's like to use these experiences as a vehicle to learn about digital inclusion and use a framework for capturing their thoughts, feelings and observations.

5. Whole group discussion about how to apply this design research approach in participants' day-to-day work or practice.
Intended outcome: Participants will understand how to derive new forms of value from this approach and how it can have impact on their work. IDEO will share.

4. Intended Audience

We want to provoke new ideas and thinking among **researchers**, **designers** and **people working with designers** (especially people working with citizens on the 'front line') to enable them to better understand how to design services that meet human needs. This has been designed to be **an introductory session for those new to or inexperienced** in these methodologies.

We would like to offer space for **30 participants**, facilitated by 3-4 from IDEO. We propose **holding 6 spaces specifically for people working on the front line/for local govt. services**

Since the proposed activities depend on a level of facilitation, we would require your support to ensure we attract **attendees who want to participate**, not just observe.

5. Length of Workshop

One half-day session (4 hours with a range of activities):
- 30 min introduction to IDEO and our design research approach
- 30 min ice breaker and coffee break
- 2 hrs in 3 mixed teams of 10 people
    - 30 min brainstorm

1 hr experiencing research activities

30 min reflection and prepare to share 'Top Takeaways for design' with the group

- 1 hr discussion

6. Space and Equipment Required

- Wi-fi open for all attendees (they need to be on the same network)
- Ideally minimum 120 sq. metres open, flat space with chairs, tables and dividers we can move around freely to make team spaces (if this is a challenge, let's discuss it!) and create space for 30 people to hula hoop! This isn't confirmed as an activity but we'd love to do it, so if we can make it work – then great.
- We need to be able to stick up paper on walls using magic tape, blu tack or magnets. Might be a possibility to substitute for several large boards.
- Likely to need multiple power sockets, including trailing multiway sockets (to plug in electrical games consoles and music equipment).
- It's going to be quite an intense and active session, so if there is the option of a room with open-able windows and natural light that would be brilliant.
- A small breakout room for 10 people.
- Refreshments (eg. hot/cold drinks and light snacks) for 30 participants
- Direct, private access to a coffee and tea stall for the workshop attendees only - and ideally 1 -2 people who can act as servers for a 15-min activity we'll do in the break.
- If you have any health and safety concerns, please allow us a month's notice to resolve any issues or revise the programme

7. Potential Outputs

Assuming participants consent to recordings, we can **offer our own videography resource** to capture the session and discussion. We can share these photo and video assets in an IDEO blog post (on Medium) about our involvement in the conference.

8. About the Organisers

We (Kate Burn, Jenny Winfield, Kate Wakely, and Akshan Ish) are Design Researchers at IDEO based in London and Munich. Our backgrounds span a range of fields (psychology, anthropology, graphic, digital and service design), so we all bring different perspectives to our discipline and our projects. We love to work together when we get the chance, but can more usually be found spearheading the research elements of our design process within multidisciplinary teams.