Design Thinking for the Food Systems
Assignment Guide

Overview

Throughout this Design Thinking exercise, I have created a set of activities for you to do, so you can "learn by doing" along the way. In order for this to be as engaging, as we can make it in a remote setting I need you to work in groups of at least two fellows.

This exercise will introduce you to the Design Thinking tools by working in your group on one of the generic challenge ideas, but will also be useful for your own challenges in your institutions. The more you continue to practice this in your work, the better you will get at discovering insights that inspire and bring your ideas to life.

To Begin you will need a "Project Challenge"

WHAT IS A PROJECT CHALLENGE? A project challenge is a "How might we" statement that will help you to apply what you are learning to a "real life" situation or scenario. You will be working in teams of at least 2 people. These groups are to help with brainstorming, sharing ideas and feedback on your prototypes.

I have crafted a few project challenge ideas for you to choose from. Framing your own challenge can be difficult. If you decide, you want to use your own challenge you will need to convince one or two other Fellows to share that challenge with you.

The challenge you select will serve as the common thread throughout this exercise. Each assignment will help you explore your chosen challenge from a new angle, and help with the final report.

Tips for choosing a challenge

-Consider a problem you are not as familiar with. It is easier to see with fresh eyes in a new context, because you come in with fewer assumptions.

-What excites you? Choose a challenge you cannot wait to dig into.

-Who do you have access to? Make sure you can go out and explore your challenge over these next three weeks, so choose one you feel confident about being able to immerse in.

Sign up for your Challenge Area on the Google Doc -
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vFAG85a5gIsbxXBmZgCD_DcvSmo3CtLG3b07g2mYFDQ/edit?usp=sharing

Challenge Ideas

HOW MIGHT WE ENCOURAGE MORE PURPOSEFUL COLLABORATION IN THE WORKPLACE?
When tackling complex challenges in the workplace, it's important to bring together diverse perspectives and skill sets. Once in place, teams need to find ways to collaborate. Collaboration in the workplace isn't getting any easier: individuals can be spread out across the globe, share different values, and feel pressure to be independently efficient rather than collaborative.

What might you do to promote cross-pollination and different ways of working together? How might you encourage more purposeful collaboration in the workplace?

HOW MIGHT WE CREATIVELY ADDRESS THE LACK OF FUNDS TO REWARD FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS?

We want to increase salaries to reward faculty, staff and students, encourage them and retain them. However, as administrators we have to deal with funding those increases. If the funding is not available the salary increases essentially become a budget cut. Sometimes the increases mean that one or more positions cannot be filled, increasing the work burden on the existing faculty and staff, negating some of the emotional benefits of the salary increases. What might you do to reward faculty, staff and students if we do not have sufficient funds to increase their salary.

HOW MIGHT WE INSPIRE HOUSEHOLDS TO ADOPT HEALTHIER EATING HABITS?

As a child, would you rather have eaten carrots or dessert? For most children, the answer is dessert. It just tastes better at that age. In 2013, an estimated 43 million children (under the age of five) suffered from early obesity globally, a 60% increase since 1990. Some might blame this increase on a shift in exercise habits. Others might point to the family structure and a decline in family mealtime routines. Regardless of the cause, children have less focus and energy without proper nutritional intake. So, what might you do to solve this challenge? How might you inspire households to adopt healthier eating habits?

HOW DO WE ADDRESS THE ACCURACY OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCANS?

Before you begin strategizing and defining initiatives, it's vital first to understand the "playing field," and develop a shared agreement on "where we are now" and "how things stand" as a critical context for deciding what "we should do." To begin to understand where you are it is useful to conduct an Environmental Scan. Since the external environment is becoming more uncertain and volatile it is important to make sure that the scan is accurate. How do we assure that the information we collect is indeed correct and timely?

HOW DO WE CREATE RESPONSIVENESS (AGILITY) IN UNIVERSITY OUTREACH:

Universities change course slowly. While Cooperative Extension functions at both the state and local levels, programming is sometimes limited by the expertise of local agents and existing state Specialists. When life changes/opportunities occur at the local level, how can/should Extension secure and/or shift resources most effectively to meet immediate needs?

Assignments

There are Four Tasks you will need to accomplish and share with your "Challenge Group" before our webinar on April 16th

1st Task—**Practice Empathizing:** Who did you observe? What are 1-3 Observations that sparked your curiosity?

2nd Task—**Define:** Define the Problem Statement

3rd Task—**Ideate:** What are your top three – five ideas?

4th Task **Prototype:** Share your prototype.   We will also share these on the webinar on April 16th at 1pm

1ˢᵗ Task—Empathize

As a design thinker, the problems you are trying to solve are rarely your own. In order to design for your challenge you must identify who you are designing for. You will need to gain empathy for them and find out what is important to them.

Observing what people do and how they react to their environment gives you clues about what they think and feel. It also helps you learn about what they need. Sometimes people do not always know what they need. However, engaging them in a good conversation and some insights may be revealed. If you pay close attention to how they answer the questions and their body language. You will see things through "a set of fresh eyes" and empathizing is what gives us those new eyes.

How to Empathize

Observe: View users and their behavior in the context of their environment. Some of the most powerful realizations come from noticing a disconnect between what someone says and what he does. Look for body language, patterns, and the unexpected.

Engage: We call this interviewing. However, it should be more like a conversation. Prepare some questions you'd like to ask but expect to let the conversation deviate from them. Elicit stories and always ask "Why?" to uncover deeper meaning.

Questions: Think about how these people can give you the insights you will need. Frame your questions around the challenge to give you insight into how you can design a solution. Think of 8-10 questions that will help give you more insight into your challenge

STRETCH EXAMPLE = LEVEL OF COOKING EXPERIENCE

Has never done it

Does it regularly

Does it as a professional

Extremes

Extremes

a cooking class for young children

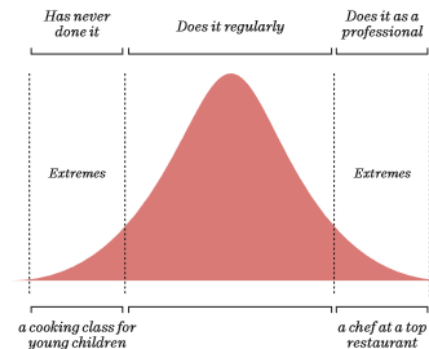a chef at a top restaurant

Act 1: Interview
Choose 1-2 people and observe and engage them. Pay attention to how and why people do what they do. If you can choose people that are at the extremes of your challenge. Learning from extreme perspectives can stretch your thinking so that you can see beyond your assumptions and get to bold, new ideas, new angles of your project challenge. Be mindful of a balanced perspective. Think of people who have little experience in your challenge area and those who might be experts. See the chart to the right for an example of extremes.

Tips for interviewing:
Build Rapport; this should be a conversation. **Ask Open ended Questions**; you want to listen more than adding any input. **Ask "Why" often**; find out what is important to them. **Tell me about;** Have them tell you a story. **Ask Naïve Questions**; unassuming questions encourage people to explain the logic of their behaviors. **Minimize your presence;** Let them talk.

Act 2: REFLECT
Considering what you observed, where are you curious to dig deeper and learn more? Your observations should pique areas of interest around your challenge that you might need to further explore. Start to make connections.

Act 3. SHARE with your "Challenge Group"
In the "Google Group-Design Thinking Workshop"

-Who did you observe?

-What are 1-3 Observations That Sparked your Curiosity.

Who did you Observe?

One to three Observations--

2ⁿᵈ Task—Define

The Define mode of the design process is all about bringing clarity and focus to the design space. This is about making sense of the information you have gathered. Think about where you want to dig deeper with your challenge. Try to synthesize your learning into a few 'needs' that you have discovered, and a few 'insights' that you find interesting. Rethink your challenge and take a stand. It should feel like a problem worth tackling. Rephrase your challenge with this new insight. Remember it might not be redesigning a new stapler.

Act 4: SHARE with your "Challenge Group" Connect with your group to work on coming up with a more narrowly focused problem statement. Consider what stood out when talking and observing people. What patterns emerged. This statement should provide focus and frame the problem. It should inspire you to work on the challenge.

In the "Google Group-Design Thinking Workshop"

Needs; Things they are trying to do (use verbs)--

Insights; What did you learn (make inferences)-

Define the Problem Statement

3rd Task—Ideate

The ideate mode of the design process is when you concentrate on idea generation. You ideate in order to transition from identifying problems to creating solutions for your users. Ideate is where you combine the understanding you have of the problem and people you are designing for and generate solution concepts. Ideation is about pushing for the widest possible range of ideas. You don't want to get stuck on one as there might be a better one in your list or you might combine some to get a more specific solution.

Several ways to Ideate:

Brainstorm: This is what ideation is all about--Get a group together, write on sticky notes to generate a flow of ideas. Remember to defer judgement. Let the ideas flow so the group can build upon the great ideas.

Mash-up: This methods is about bringing odd or unexpected things together to spark fresh ideas. (e.g., hospital/hotel)

Different Perspective: Look at the solution through the eyes of someone else.

E-Storming: If it is hard to get a group together think about sending a shout-out over email. Make the subject line appealing and set a deadline.

Convergent Thinking:

Converging is about focusing –not settling on what ideas are simplest to execute. Narrow down your ideas into 3-5 top ideas. Several ways to narrow down your ideas are: If you used brainstorming with a group have them **vote**.
Look for similarities and **cluster** them together.

Act 5: SHARE with your "Challenge Group"
In the "Google Group-DesignThinking Workshop"

Which method did you use to Ideate?

How many different ideas did you generate?

What were your top 3-5 ideas

Which Method?

Top Three –Five ideas:

4th Task—Prototype

Prototyping is getting something tangible made to share with your users. It can be anything that a user can interact with—be it a wall of post-it notes, a gadget you put together, a role-playing activity, or even a storyboard. You want it to be something that the user can experience. A storyboard is great but having them role-play through a physically created space will likely bring out more responses from them. Like the "Lunch Room" experience that IDEO redesigned.

The user should be able to engage and react to the prototype.

How to Prototype

Start Building: Even if you aren't sure what you are doing, the act of picking up some materials (post-its, tape and found objects are a good way to start!) will be enough to get you going.

Don't spend too long on one prototype: Let go before you find yourself getting too emotionally attached to any one prototype.

ID what it is: Identify what is being tested. A prototype should answer a particular questions when tested.

Build with the user in mind: What do you hope to achieve with your prototype. What should the user get out of it?

Create an experience for your user: The user needs to be able to engage in the prototype.

Act 6: Look at your top 3-5 Ideas and decide on one to prototype
Create a physical prototype of your solution. Create an experience or make something that your user can engage and react to.

SHARE it with your "Challenge Group"
In the "Google Group-DesignThinking Workshop"

Document your prototype building process and final creation. You can share your prototype as a comic strip, storyboard, or advertisement. Or, it can be a simple sketch or photo of what you made.

These will be shared on the webinar that we will hold on April 16th at 1pm EDT