Practical Tips for Designing a Co-design Workshop

Designing a workshop is an iterative process. A good way to start is by fleshing out some key activities, and the outcomes they might enable. Review these in line with the objectives of the workshop and identify which activities have the most potential to enable your objectives. Begin working these into an actual agenda, thinking through timing, flow and the specific inputs and outputs of each activity. Consider the following points as you do so.

A Balanced Agenda

Balance between stimulus and overload. Once you have a rough outline, think about how the day is paced. Is there the right balance between activities and discussions, breaks and energisers?

Appropriate Framing

The framing of the questions and activities will shape how people participate. They need to be at the right level for people to be able to easily understand the goal of the activity and what they are trying to do. It is a fine balance between setting direction (orientating the activity towards the topic) without directing the outcome. If participants can't make sense of an activity, or it needs a lot of additional explanation, this can break trust and have an impact on the momentum of the workshop.

Diversity

Ensure everyone can contribute. Diverse methods will help to cater for the different strengths and communication styles of attendees.

Space for discussion, reflection & creativity

Remember to allow enough time for discussion after each activity. Much of the sharing and idea building can happen in this space and it is important to give participants the opportunity to connect and build on each other's ideas. It can be useful to have structured feedback e.g., if presenting concepts or scenarios, people might write down one thing they would keep about the proposal and one thing they would change. This way, aspects of scenarios or prototypes can be combined or built upon in the next activity.

Practical Tips

- Ensure instructions are clear and visible to all. People will want to refer back to ensure they are on track (e.g., post them up on the wall near each group)

- People have a spatial memory. It can help to leave things up on the wall in the same place for people to refer back to.

- It can help to get people to generate ideas or responses on their own first, e.g. using Post-It notes, before moving into a group space

- Use tools like Post-It notes that can be moved around by participants and re-organised

- Have groups use big pieces of paper and large scale writing – so that everyone can contribute and see

- Have all the props and materials nearby and ready

- Keep people's energy up with regular breaks (approx. every 90 minutes). Provide food and water, especially if in an air conditioned place where people can get tired and dehydrated easily

- Set ground rules e.g., are mobiles ok? Say how you will be supporting participation from all people in the room?

- Where appropriate a note keeper who is transcribing as you go can help speed up processing after

- Design templates in such a way that they transfer most easily into the deliverables that you need

- Check out the room prior to see how the space will work and make sure there is enough wall space

Co-Design Techniques and Methods

This is a work in progress bibliography of industry articles and academic papers that describe, discuss or demonstrate various co-design and collaborative techniques. (Also posted on http://www.smallfire.co.nz/?p=779 See also related post on Design Guides/Frameworks/Toolkits)

Co-design Method/Technique Overviews

Liz Sanders is the first start point for Co-design Techniques and methods, she makes all her presentations and papers available at www.maketools.com

Convivial Toolbox: Generative Research for the Front End of Design by Liz Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers provides extensive coverage of generative toolkits and how they can be used in practice.

Brandt, E. (2006) Designing exploratory design games: a framework for participation in Participatory Design, PDC '06 Proceedings of the ninth conference on Participatory design: Expanding boundaries in design - Volume 1, Pages 57 - 66 ACM New York, NY

A Framework for Organising the Tools and Techniques of Participatory Design by Sanders, Brandt and Binder this paper provides a framework for thinking about how, when and why different co-design methods and techniques work and can be used.

Creativity-based Research: The Process of Co-Designing with Users: A great over view of some of the methods and techniques by Catalina Naranjo-Bock (also drawing on Liz's work) for UX Magazine

Enabling Co-design A discussion of principles and techniques by myself and Natalie Rowland for Johnny Holland.

Creating Together, Building Value with Participatory Design: An overview and case studies of different methods from experience design agency Experientia

Not to prime is a Crime: An article on the value of "pre-tasks" to sensitise participants before workshops by Jodie Moule of Symplicit (using generative techniques such as collage).

Collective Action ToolKit from Frog http://www.frogdesign.com/work/frog-collective-action-toolkit.html

Specific Techniques/Examples

A Game, Making your way: An example of using board games as a research technique developed by Mel Edwards for the IRD

Inspiration Card Workshops A paper describing a card technique to support inspiration and design sessions with users by Kim Halskov and Peter Dalsgård

Playful Triggers to Visualise Knowledge Explanation and example of a method developed by Yoko Akama and Daria Loi (example is community workshops to increase bushfire awareness in Victoria, Australia)

Co-design methods for designing with and for families A paper reporting on a specific project and various techniques by Bo Westerlund et al

An Iterative and Participatory HCI Design Process in the Industry Context: Bringing together Utility, Usability and Innovation ...within Budget A paper reporting on techniques used for prototyping interfaces in participatory workshops

Service innovation through touch-points: the AT-ONE touch-point cards A description of the development of At-One touchpoint cards and mapping technique, valuable for cross functionality and multi-disciplinary teams

Facilitating Collaborative Design Workshops – a step by step guide for rapidly creating a shared vision for execution A very detailed description by Jason Furnell from Thoughtworks of their internal collaborative design process

Time for a new approach? Rapid prototyping at the Social Change Collaboratory A blog post by David Hood explaining a team-based rapid prototyping activity (board game based) originally developed at Deloitte.

References

Connecting Generations: Developing Co-Design Methods for Older Adults and Children   An exploratory paper exploring how co-design methods can support cross generational design and research by Xie et al

Empathy Probes An overview of using "empathy probes" to support the design process by Tuuli Mattelmäki and Katja Battarbee (Mattelmäki has done extensive work on this approach e.g., Examples of Probes Planning)

Co-Design: Toward A New Service Vision
For Australia?
http://www.humanservices.gov.au/spw/corporate/publications-and-resources/resources/co-design-toward-a-new-service-vision-for-australia.pdf

More General
Some lessons learned, regarding prototyping and framing, from PD workshops Very interesting and useful discussion paper reflecting on how co-design and participatory workshops work, things to be aware of etc, with example by Bo Westerlund

Experiencing, exploring and experimenting in and with Co-design spaces A paper exploring the notion of co-design spaces by Liz Sanders and Bo Westerlund.

Co-Design Toolkits
Health Codesign A toolkit for co-design in healthcare developed by Hilary Boyd, Stephen McKernon and Andrew Old

Change by design: Building communities through participatory design Examples of methods and activities
Participatory Design Texts

People and Participation.net An extensive and ever growing resource of principles, practices, resources case studies and methods for supporting and planning for participation that grew out of the Involve 2005 book.

Articles

Ehn, P. (1988). Work-Orientated Design of Computer Artifacts. Stockholm: Arbetslivscentrum.

Hagen, P, Collin, P, Metcalf, A, Nicholas, M, Rahilly, K, & Swainston, N 2012, Participatory Design of evidence-based online youth mental health promotion, prevention, early intervention and treatment, Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.

Greenbaum, J., & Kyng, M. (Eds.). (1991). Design at Work: Cooperative Design of Computer Systems. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associated.

Schuler, D., & Namioka, A. (Eds.). (1993). Participatory Design: Principles and Practices: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Simonsen, J. & Robertson, T. (2012). Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design, Routledge