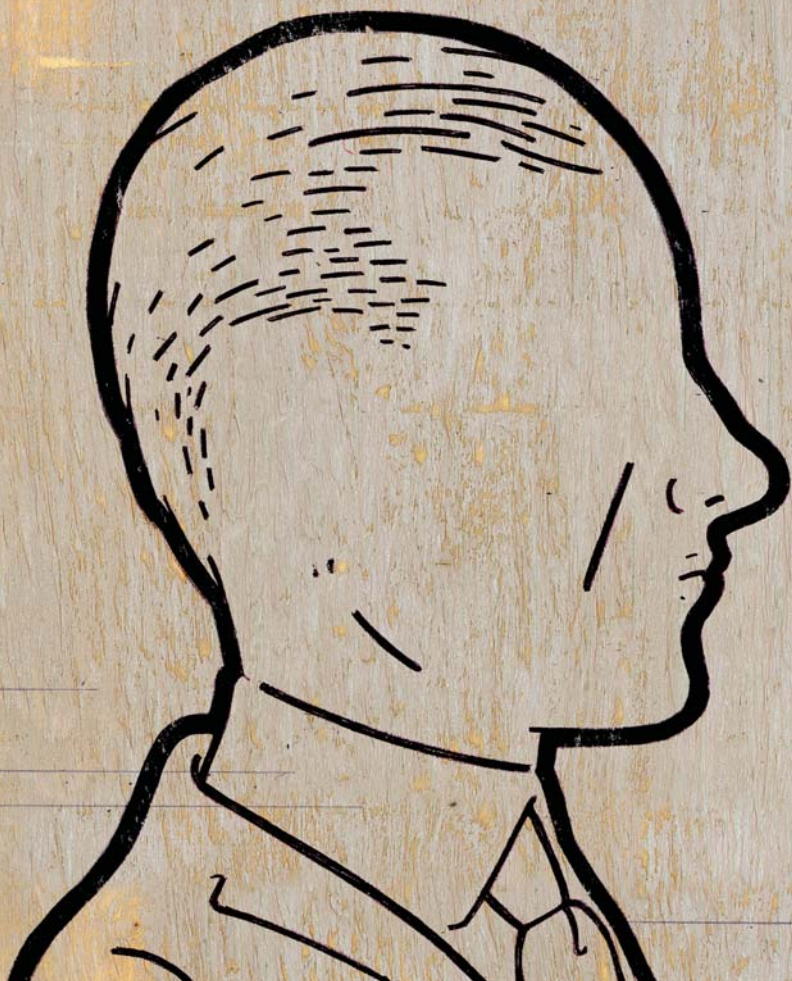


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MARKETING AT C-LEVEL

DESIGNPROCESS



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LISTENING LESSONS



About the author

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MAKE CONSUMERS PART OF THE DESIGN PROCESS BY TUNING IN

By Paul Bennett

DESIGNPROCESS

5 STEPS TO DESIGN THINKING

At Ideo, we pride ourselves on designing experiences, products, services, interactions and spaces in five steps that are deceptively simple and pretty much always the same.

1. Observe

Go out into the world and look and listen to people, see what they are missing, what they like and dislike. Use that to inspire the design of the experience and the way that experience communicates to the outside world.

2. Brainstorm

Do intense idea-generation based on everything you saw in observations. Create one hundred ideas in no more than an hour.

3. Prototype

Make your favorite ideas real in a rough and ready way. Ideas that are quickly expressed in forms that other people can see, hear, touch or otherwise experience don't stay abstract for long.

4. Implement

Bring the skills together to design, engineer and develop the solution to the point of production.

5. Tell the Story

Communicate the experience of the product, service or space by revisiting the insights that provided inspiration for the design. Tell stories that reflect the truth.

It used to be that getting a successful product or service or anything to market went something like this: Cook up some cool new gadget or food or cleaning gel in your lab, then conduct focus groups to “validate” whether anyone would buy it and for how much. Next, conduct some technical analysis to see how it could be made and for how much, and then make shed-loads of it. After that, pass the product over to the marketing department for more focus groups. Marketing then passes it over the fence to the creative department which, in turn, brings in an ad agency. The agency probably does some “planning” to see what kind of people would buy it and then brief their creative teams who go write funny ads. The ads end up on a “concept board” somewhere in the halls of your creative department a few months later, and then land in magazines and on the television. There is a lot of “buzz” and everyone buys lots of the product that you had sold them.

That's the way it was.

But then something went wrong. Consumers got all clever.

Now it's different. The days of selling stuff are over. Consumers are often at least as smart as marketers, and probably smarter. They know what you're doing, and they're rejecting you for making them feel like a “target.” They are investing their hard-earned money, and, more important, their time and attention. They want to be part of the process; not just the recipient of it.

HONORING REQUESTS

Imagine this scenario. You're a big telecommunications company with a hunch that there's a whole group of consumers not being served by you. They're perhaps a little older, less tech-savvy and, frankly, less “sexy” than the usual ring-tone crowd.

So you go out and talk to them, and you listen quietly without judgment as they pour out their hearts, telling you that they would like a phone that's simpler, but just as well designed, and that does lots of smart intuitive things like get you to your voicemail in one step and recall numbers that you probably constantly forget. Oh, and the phone should look good and talk to them in simple terms, with no jargon and no long words. And no 345-page manual, please.

So you go out and you make that phone, and you call it Simply, because that's what it is. And you don't pass this project around from pillar to post inside your organization, but keep the same team on it. And you ask them to help brief your communications company.

And here's the kicker: What the ads tell people at the end is the same as what they were asking for in the first place.

You and your agency even go as far as to use direct quotes from the observational insights as ads. So people recognized the truths they were being told (as opposed to myths that they were being sold) and bought the phone. In droves. This was Simply by Vodafone, launched



NEW PROCESS

It's time not for new media, new eyeballs, new words for old tricks. It's time for a new process, and the methods and tools of design thinking have a lot to teach the marketing and communication world (see sidebar).

Clients keep asking us, "Well, how would you bring this to market?" and our answer is for them to seek inspiration in real life and keep hold of the insights through the whole cycle of development till you finally reach the marketplace.

Our favorite response from a consumer to any product that comes out in the market? "At last!"

Seeking inspiration from real life is a surprisingly obvious idea, but it is easily overlooked when we become preoccupied with professional roles, with their

traditional domains and established processes. There is a lot of inertia involved in breaking away from traditional ways of working, even to do something as simple as leaving our offices to go out in the world and observe directly what is happening there. But for people who regard themselves as tasked with problem solving or innovation, it is imperative to encourage and elevate the practice of observation. It is a proven way of inspiring and informing contextually relevant ideas. It fuels the creation of strategies that, in turn, fuel expression, which fuels marketing and communication.

Simply Useful

Vodafone launched Simply across Europe and in New Zealand in May 2005, the result of the company's heeding the needs and concerns of cell-phone users.

she didn't know how to reply to a text message, so she would send back handwritten notes through her son, on his bicycle. Others said, "I get lost in menus, and can't find my way back" or "the small writing on screens makes me squint and gives me wrinkles"—so Wieden & Kennedy, Vodafone's agency in the Netherlands, used just these comments from the early insights as the material for the advertising. The outcome? The Simply sales exceeded expectations in all European markets because the truth was told.

across Europe and in New Zealand in May 2005.

Ideo had found in observations across Europe, carried out at the start of the Vodafone Simply project, that many users didn't know how to tell when they had received a text message on their regular cellphones. Some thought the envelope icon that signals a message meant their phone bill had arrived. One woman in Italy said

Value attributed to brand is a result of customers' collective experience of products, services, spaces, communications and people. Designed experiences based on human insights facilitate the conversations that are necessary to create buy-in and consensus from all the stakeholders including the consumer. That is design thinking.

RARE GEMS

Indeed, brands that speak to people and acknowledge their feelings and intelligence are rare. A few examples are Mini, Google and Dove.

Here's an example of this in action, one that has nothing to do with ads but everything to do with what I am talking about: the design

process in action. It's fundamentally a process of really listening and looking. I like to call it, as we are oft inclined to do in the U.K., a "blinding glimpse of the bleeding obvious." Ideo was asked by a large healthcare system in 2003 to help them design their "patient experience." They had hired lots of fancy consultants to look at the same problem and they had delivered lots of PowerPoint graphs and "mind maps," and generally tried to solve the problem from an internal organization point of view.

To demonstrate what the real experience of going to the hospital was like for the patient, we lay in a hospital bed and videotaped the ceiling for what seemed like forever, looking at chipped polystyrene ceiling tiles and a

buzzing fluorescent light while listening to disembodied voices talking about us, over us. At our first major presentation, we started by showing an uncut seven-minute clip to the president of the hospital, with the simple statement, "This is your patient experience."

The hospital leadership had never considered using the human experience as the starting point for strategies for hospital systems. The observations subsequently carried out led to the creation of design principles that are guiding the design and ensure continual innovation. The hospital was completed in Indiana in 2005.

Bottom line? Open your eyes. There's a whole new way of doing stuff out there. ■