Creativity at work

Excerpts from an interview with Linda Naiman
Founder, Creativity at work

What is Design Thinking?

Design Thinking is a methodology used by designers to solve complex problems, and find desirable solutions for clients. A design mind-set is not problem-focused, it's solution focused and action oriented towards creating a preferred future. Design Thinking draws upon logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning, to explore possibilities of what could be—and to create desired outcomes that benefit the end user (the customer).

"Design thinking can be described as a discipline that uses the designer's sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity."

Distinctions between Design and Design Thinking

Nigel Cross (2007), in his book *Designerly Ways of Knowing*, says, "Everything we have around us has been designed. Design ability is, in fact, one of the three fundamental dimensions of human intelligence. Design, science, and art form an 'AND' not an 'OR' relationship to create the incredible human cognitive ability."

- Science — finding similarities among things that are different
- Art — finding differences among things that are similar
- Design — creating feasible 'wholes' from infeasible 'parts'

It makes sense, therefore, to break out of the silos we have created in organizations and develop a cross-disciplinary inquiry to foster innovation.

How do you create a strategy for guaranteeing that innovation and creativity flourish in your organization?

When design principles are applied to strategy and innovation the success rate for innovation dramatically improves. Design-led companies such as Apple, Coca-Cola, IBM, Nike, Procter & Gamble and Whirlpool have outperformed the S&P 500 over the past 10 years by an extraordinary 219%, according to a 2014 assessment by the Design Management Institute.

Great design has that "wow" factor that makes products more desirable and services more appealing to users.

Due to the remarkable success rate of design-led companies, design has evolved beyond making objects. Organizations now want to learn how to *think* like designers, and apply design principles to the workplace itself. Design thinking is at the core of effective strategy development and organizational change.

"Design-thinking firms stand apart in their willingness to engage in the task of continuously redesigning their business…to create advances in both innovation and efficiency—the combination that produces the most powerful competitive edge."

You can design the way you lead, manage, create and innovate. The design way of thinking can be applied to systems, procedures, protocols, and customer/user experiences. The purpose of design, ultimately, in my view, is to improve the quality of life for people and the planet.

How to develop Design Thinking capabilities in an organization?

You don't have to be a designer to think like one. While learning to be a good designer takes years, you can think like a designer and design the way you lead, manage, create and innovate. Design begins with setting a strategic intention. If you are mapping out a strategy, you are designing.

What does Design thinking involve?

Explore the strategic dimensions of design thinking and learn practical tools and techniques that integrate right-brain imagination, artistry and intuition with left-brain logic, analysis, and planning. Methods for thinking like a designer include observing, interviewing, creating personas, empathy mapping, storyboards, associational thinking, creating low-tech prototypes, and decision-making analysis. In other words, design is a whole-brain creative thinking process.

- Develop the mind-sets, skillsets, and toolsets of designers, artists, and innovators
- How to connect more deeply with customers to discover opportunities for innovation
- Break through barriers that have kept you stuck
- Experiment with idea generation, critical thinking, aesthetic ways of knowing, problem-solving and rapid-prototyping
- Foster a culture that enhances creativity and innovation
- Generate ideas to seed your innovation ecosystem