Human-centred Design Step 2: Ideation - Coming up with ideas

Now that we have collected information from our target audience, we have a starting point to create solutions.

Using our example, Dennis gathers some key insights from the students he has interviewed:

1. They want bags that are stylish, but comfortable to carry and have enough space to carry their items
2. The bags should have space to carry a laptop without it being too obvious

He feels that he wants to create bags of his own that meet the students' needs.

His challenge: "How might we create stylish bags that can carry a laptop without making it obvious?"

He sits down with a few friends, and they list down ideas on how they could create laptop bags for the students. He comes up with plenty of different ideas, such as having a hidden compartment that could hold the laptop, creating the bags in non-conventional shapes, and having a detachable extension to add space for a laptop.

As he is coming up with the ideas, he avoids judging whether the ideas are good or bad. His goal is to come up with as many different ideas in the shortest time possible.

He comes up with plenty of ideas and once he is done, he selects the ideas that he thinks would work best.

This is the process of ideation.

So, how exactly does it work?

Step 1: Sort the information you collected

1. What new information did you learn during your interview?
2. What assumptions did you have that were confirmed?
3. What assumptions were contradicted?
4. What was a commonly repeated problem during the interview? Is that something worth pursuing as a business idea?

Step 2: Defining the problem
One way to define the problem is to develop a How might we statement.
How Might We questions are questions that have the potential to spark the generation of ideas..

'How might we' statements are based on the information that was collected in the empathise stage.

For instance, in the example we are using, Dennis comes up with the following How Might We statement:

"How might we create bags for students that can carry a laptop without making it obvious?"

Step 3: Brainstorming
Brainstorming is one process used to come up with ideas. Brainstorms help to generate many diverse ideas in a short amount of time.

How to do a brainstorm
1. Get a group of people together. Ideally, this group should be as diverse as possible (different education backgrounds, ages, etc) to help generate unique ideas
2. Introduce the group involved in the problem. This should be done before the group gathers to brainstorm
3. Set a time limit for the brainstorm session. For instance, you could give the group 20 minutes to come up with as many ideas as possible.
4. Go for quantity, not quality. Try to generate as many ideas in the allocated time. Defer judgement of the ideas in order to promote creativity
5. Try to make the ideas as different from each other as possible
6. Encourage wild ideas. Crazy ideas sometimes lead to creative solutions
7. Build on each other's ideas. For example, if someone says something, you could add 'and we could also….'

Each idea should be written down on a separate post-it note. Don't be afraid to illustrate some ideas if need be.

Group similar ideas
Once you have your post-its ready, group similar ideas together. You can combine some as well to build an even better idea.

Select your idea
Lastly, select the idea that you want to test out. This is the one that will move on to the next stage of the human-centred design process.

Additional reading:

1. Three ideation methods to enhance your creative thinking:
   https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/three-ideation-methods-to-enhance-your-innovative-thinking
2. What is ideation and how to prepare for ideation sessions:
   https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/what-is-ideation-and-how-to-prepare-for-ideation-sessions
3. 5 conditions that make a business opportunity feasible:
   https://www.profitableventure.com/conditions-business-opportunity-feasible/