RESEARCH

It is important to approach this phase with an open mind. Designers have a tendency to begin designing the moment they hear the basic premise. Sometimes this works, however this can be dangerous. Without research, there is no way of knowing whether our initial understanding of the audience, product, or need are correct. We research to see things as they really are.

Prioritization

The research phase is also the process of prioritizing the effects of the design. Since no design is capable of answering an infinite number of criteria, The most important criteria must be identified and ranked.

Problem Definition

Defining problems with current artifact

Identifying areas of greatest potential return

Research is necessary for understanding which prob-

lems should be addressed. Doing so will prevent the

designer from spending resources creating the right

Identify areas needing improvement.

solution for an irrelevant problem.

Understanding the past What has been done in the past? How well has it worked?

Understanding the past allows the designer to build upon what has already been done. He should ask, "What can I learn from past

mistakes and success?"

Understanding the Issues

Researching the technical issues Gather stories Gather visual data

The primary purpose of research is to gain an understanding of the core issues at hand.

General description of project is

given to the designer by the client.

Field Research Ethnographic studies Interview relevant parties

Gather stories Competitor Audit By observing practitioners in a real environment, designers gain a better understanding of the audience. This understanding helps designers avoid the fallacy

the designer does.

Designer returns a proposal to the client

breaking down fees and deliverables

associated with each phase.

that the audience thinks and responds exactly like

IDEATION

This is often the most difficult part of the design process to explain, quantify or analyze. The research phase has provided a clear set of requirements & and a thorough understanding of the problem space. Cognitive elements are now combined to create new meaning.

Exploration Different point of view

Changing our perspective relative to the problem definition will reveal new ideas and possibilities. Locking down too early in

the process will limit the range of ideas.

Questioning Conventions Asking "What if.. + Does it have to be...

To come up with better solutions, the designer must question current perceptions. Doing so may lead to ideas outside the defined problem space. Ascertain the reasons behind the current systems and ideas. Are they based on

need, or tradition.

RAW MATERIALS A clear understanding of the issues and elements. The designer becomes an expert on the culture he

is representing and the audience.

SOLUTION CRITERIA A set of criteria that a successful solution must meet. Who it will appeal to, the needs it will address and any other measurable criteria.

Creating artificial constraints

Our minds are solution oriented. It is easier to find solutions when we have a well defined problem. Introducing artificial constraints allows the mind to search for work arounds – ways of answering the criteria despite limitations.

Impractical ideation

Freeing yourself from practical constraints allows consideration of unique and unexpected ideas. The tendency is to dismiss an idea that isn't feasible. But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Allow blue sky thinking. Discarding ideas based on practical constraint must occur at some point, but should not impede idea generation.

Looking for interesting combinations

Combining elements creates new entities. The meanings embedding in these elements blend to create new meaning.

Making Connections

Looking for Juxtapositions

Making the invisible visible

Drawing and writing transforms abstract

ideas into physical artifacts. When these

concepts are visible, we are able to see

they are in the ether of our mind.

their potential with more clarity than when

Sketching + Word Lists

Inspiration

Looking outside problem space

Find elements that are inspiring for one reason or another. Why are they inspiring? Can these principles of inspiration apply to the problem you are facing? For example, the balance between chaos and order in a tree or the emotion of an empty parking lot can all be catalysts for new looking. Looking at the problem in unfamiliar ways can reveal unexpected attributes.

FORM GIVING

This is the process of giving an idea spatial form. Care is taken to ensure that stylistic decisions are in harmony with core concepts and message. This is the process of eliminating elements that are not essential to the idea. Often designers jump into this phase too early because the results are more tangible. Doing so is less effective because formal decisions that are not based upon an ideas are hollow like frosting on styrofoam.

Shifting Medium

Change the medium of exploration when stuck on one formal train of thought. Consider unusual mediums such as legos or fingerpaints as well as traditional pens and pencils.

Prototype Creation Explorations in the computer Mock-up creation at full size Evaluation and review

Prototypes can inform the designer of flaws in the you to put your design in front of more people. Welcome critique, but weigh comments against solution criteria before adopting suggestions.

ABSTRACT CONCEPTS A logical idea for answering the criteria established in the research phase. This concept represents the elements of the problem space in a elegant and

Stylistic Exploration Formal language definition Image & Graphic creation

> Typographic style choice The stylistic decisions will add the correct emotion

deer a trendy style and apply it blindly to the design. Avoid this. Stylistic decision should be purposeful and intelligent.

FINISHED PLANS Final plans are presented to the producer. Care is taken to ensure smooth translation

into the finished artifact.

Formal exploration Sketching to explore division of space Exploring visual language embedded in subject Exploratory photographic sketches

Symmetrical & asymmetrical balance Interesting division of space Establishing a grid structure Repetition with variation Active negative space Big medium small

Principles of design

Arranging elements intelligently according to the principles of design allow the designer to emphasize the correct elements, establish clear hierarchy, and create dynamic designs.

Happy Accidents

At times the act of experimentation reveals unexpected and successful results. Create a system for preserving your designs as you explore. Doing so will allow you to retain any interesting discoveries. The final design is often a combination of the best facets of multiple explorations.

Temporary Insanity

A portion of the formal exploration can be spent trying unusual, unexpected and wildly inappropriate forms. Doing so frees the designer from the constraints of sane thinking (if only temporarily). The line between genius and madness is often a thin one. Try to avoid evaluating the feasibility of the forms at this point.

REALIZATION

When the design is complete, it is then produced. Care is taken to prepare the designs so the produced artifact will remain true to the design. An awareness of this phase must be maintained throughout all of the phases. Finding balance between technical constraints and innovation is key.

Responsibility + Stewardship

There should be a clear division of responsibility so the designer can ensure he has done all in his power to prepare the items under his control for production. In the unfortunate event of a flawed production, clear divisions of stewardship will simplify the process of fault assignment and protect each party.

Quality Control Preparation of files for fulfillment

Gain an understanding of the technical requirements as early in the design process as possible to avoid creating a design that is not producable.

Digital Files given to printer or engineer

Budget

Design needs are weighed against budget constraints in an effort to produce the highest quality piece for the lowest investment.

Preparation of files for fulfillment Digital Files given to printer or engineer

The producer will have preferences for the format, structure, and preparation of the designs. Working closely with the producer when preparing designs for hand off will help him produce an accurate artifact.

Hand off

Deadline and Production Schedule

A clearly defined production schedule with specific hand-off points is necessary to ensure delivery. Understanding production time requirements will prevent unpleasant surprises. Try to allow some leeway when possible.

Who are the stakeholders

Identify the key decision makers

Identify the people who will be affected

Identify individuals with a vested interest in project

Understanding the stakeholders (as well as the audience) will

stakeholder reaction will inhibit exploration. Rather, this knowl-

edge is valuable for crafting the presentation of ground breaking

prevent designers from presenting an idea that won't make

it past the gatekeepers. On the other hand second-guessing

ideas to the decision maker in the most palatable way.

After research is complete, client and designer agree on the criteria describing a successful solution.