

Asking the right questions

Somewhere along my professional journey, I set a goal on becoming a high-level executive in the health-tech industry. As I slowly gained more exposure into the corporate environment, I have come to realize that this goal goes beyond exceeding key performance indicators. I am privileged to be in a position where high level leadership is relatively accessible, and I have been taking advantage of this opportunity to continue to learn and grow into this leadership role. Over the last year, I have formed a mentor-student role with someone in leadership. As it relates to the content of the last five weeks of this course, one of the most important aspects of becoming an effective leader, as iterated by my mentor, is being someone who can ask the appropriate questions. At the time I received this advice, I did not believe it was something that I could benefit from. This advice only registered a couple of months when my team invested considerable time into the development of a feature to improve the performance and efficiency of internal employees, as believed by upper management. Now approximately 3 months past its implementation, the feature remains untouched because it did not address the needs of the target employees. After reading “Are You Solving the Right Problems?” published by the Harvard Business Review, I feel as though I’ve improved my grasp on the concept of taking the time to find the right questions that need to be solved. This article is saved on my phone for reference whenever I have the opportunity to provide input to leadership on ideas for future projects. In reference to this article, I feel as though I’ve taken on the role of ‘Charlotte,’ the outsider described in step two.

Empathy as a tool

During the third year of my undergraduate degree, all students in the facility of health sciences were required to take the course titled “Professional Ethics & Communication.” In this course, the topic of Empathy was discussed very heavily from a philosophical and theoretical perspective. Upon completing the course, I found myself more perplexed than enlightened on the topics discussed throughout the course. Underneath the technical jargon, I left this course understanding empathy as one’s ability to ‘understand the feelings of another individual,’ an unsatisfactory revelation with no guidance on how to apply this concept of empathy, rather than understanding that it exists and it’s something that professionals should have as they work with patients. After exploring empathy in the context of design thinking, I feel as though I’ve finally grasped the practical applications that I was looking for in the Professional Ethics course. Human-centered design thinking has provided me with a framework through which I could use empathy more effectively. While I haven’t had an opportunity to use the concept as intended in the toolkit, I believe that understanding empathy in the context of product design has improved my communication skills, more specifically, my active listening capabilities. Being able to internally ask yourself ‘why does this person feel this way’ or ‘what underlying factors or experience has led to this train of thought’ is something that I have come to value in both my personal and professional life.

Adhering to human-centered design thinking for developing artificial general intelligence

With growing interest and investments into Artificial Intelligence (AI) after OpenAI demonstrated our current engineering capabilities, I do not think it would be far-fetched to say that artificial general intelligence (AGI) is something extremely far off into the future. As of recently, OpenAI disclosed in their March 22nd review of GPT-4 that the model can be considered an early version of AGI. As organizations and researchers work to develop AGI, I am skeptical about the robustness of the framework human-centered design thinking (HCDT) in guiding the development of AGI. While HCDT may be appropriate for shaping the design of current AI systems and their interfaces, the complexity of AGI extends beyond traditional tech products. Because AGI will most likely exhibit capabilities beyond human capabilities, it would be difficult to rely solely on human-centered perspectives to guide its development. As I reflect on this topic, I feel that as we continue to work towards AGI, there needs to be equal effort in refining the framework for human-centered design thinking in order to account for the unique challenges associated with AGI.