

Human Centered Design : Needfinding

- Discussion Prompt

What's something that you've learned by talking directly with end users? This could be a design project, or a situation where you've helped somebody figure something out.

When in high school, I had the pleasure of directing an awareness shortfilm on "Waste Management and Segregation". It was structured like a typical documentary - filled with a morose scenes of wastes heaped in landfills, diseased cows, crows and dogs scavenging for scraps in a motley heap of decomposing wastes.

Once we were done with the shooting and reviewing the footage, I immediately told them of the next destination I had originally planned - visiting a farm where they were making compost using these decomposable wastes as fertilizers - followed by an inspiring interview from the farm head thus ending it in a positive note. The team did most of the lifting - preparing the questions, booking slots, travel planning etc. with the funds we were allocated.

A few days later, we did the shoot and as we were returning, we had a fervent discussion on how to proceed with the editing. I was a typical introvert, never talking much. But whenever my faults were pointed out, my intellectual arrogance peeked out - smoothing over it and never really taking it into mind. I didn't know if they had noticed, but they soon stopped talking altogether finally giving me a chance to have some peace and quiet.

However, Soundarya - a chippy young woman from our team couldn't take it. She kept chatting and invited us to her home as a token of her thanks to everyone in the team. Nothing better to do that day, we agreed. Little did I know, it would be the best decision I would make that day.

Her mother invited us in, thanked us and enquired about our recent activities. I didn't know what came over me, but I started ranting about the troubles I had coming up with an engrossing story. After hearing about it, she smiled and asked us to follow her to the rooftop. When asked about it, she simply stated that it would be helpful. Intrigued, we followed and soon saw a picturesque vegetable garden ripe with produce. She then said that she had been recycling her daily organic wastes as fertilisers for her rooftop vegetable garden.

I was dumbfounded. I never realised I would stumble upon such perfect video material by simply opening up to someone. It was the first time I genuinely felt the importance of interaction and reciprocation. I was still an introvert – albeit a more sensible one.

Thanks to her we had a blast. Though the video was to be submitted to school and we were not allowed to have copies (a bummer indeed) watching the audiences' live reactions was fulfilling enough.