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How I used Designed thinking to turn around the most "hated" course in the Information Systems (IS)

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When foundational Information Systems courses are offered in the business schools, they often are offered separately to the IS students or Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students. In essence, these courses are being siloed in the departments. In California State University Los Angeles, for example, a separate foundation of Information Systems is offered to IS students vs. the MBA students. The foundation course was either too simplistic for students with technology background or too techno-centric for business students. This foundational course was the most unfavorable in both of the programs.

To turn around this "hated" course, I applied a two-pronged approach. One, to take the Information Systems out of the siloed departments, in Cal State, I proposed that MBA and IS students take the same foundational course. The second, instead of making the course survey of 12-15 IS topics, I transformed into a Design Thinking in Information Systems. In the new course, the students collaboratively work on solving real IS-related problems by applying design thinking methodology. Design thinking is a human-centric creative problem-solving framework "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 (Brown 2008).

The course focuses on collaboratively complete a design thinking research projects with the clients such as Student Success and Advising and others in campus entities. The students develop and present actual prototypes based on client needs. The students present their final projects in front of a diverse audience such as the department chair, client representatives, and members of the Deans' office. The class has received positive feedback from the clients as well as the College of Business and Economics Deans' office.

Information technology management is becoming increasingly complex, more globalized with managers and project team members being widely distributed, and requiring interactions with less familiar people (Reich 2010). Marketable skills for this dynamic environment are the abilities of abstract reasoning, systems thinking, collaboration, and the ability to experiment (Reich 2002). With the redesigned course, students were able to acquire these markable skills.

References

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