



The Power of Design

Empowering designers to enact change

The Power of Design sets out to get designers to work for social good. The year 2020 has highlighted many of the inequalities many of us face everyday. Though our society has made tremendous progress in the last decade, there is still a lot of work to be done. Issues like civil rights, healthcare, poverty, and many others need everyday citizens at the forefront of these movements to aid in making this progress. As designers, we can do our part in championing these ideas and working for social and political change in our nation. Our hope is to make some of these projects known and to convince designers like you to join in.

Whether it is working on a project for a non-profit or governmental agency, or doing volunteer design work for your local community, there are endless opportunities to utilize design for positive change and social good. The Power of Design works to bring together and support designers through practice, online networks, and designing development opportunities. Designs that help progress social and political movements can be found everywhere, from the Center for Analytical Approaches to Social Innovation at the University of Pittsburgh, to projects like Everyone Everyday in London.

How to create change?



Getting Started

It may appear to be a daunting task to go out and seek a project like this, after all almost everyone wants to do something to help out, but the truth is many people just don't know where to start. In reality, it is actually much easier than you may think, with a team of great people and your knowledge of design skills, you can make the change you want to see. There are three main steps you should focus on when doing design work for social and political change.

1. Finding a project

First, you will want to find a project to work on. Whether you are creating your own project from the ground up or searching for an existing one to work on, there are many resources at your disposal. Choosing a topic for your project is easy, just ask yourself: "What am I passionate about? What do I want to see changed and how can I help to enact that change?" Get out some paper and a pen and brainstorm some topics. Think about things that affect you and your community.

Do some research.

Before embarking on your design project, you need to do your research. Researching is a very important aspect when picking a project, especially when trying to enact effective change. Make sure you are well versed in both the project you are tackling, and general design principles in that field. Say you want to create a design that helps to drive people to the polls to vote. Not only would you want to research things like how voting works and election dates, but you also need to research ways to make your design effective, like what designs would work best for making a call to action that drives people to the polls?

Looking for an existing project.

Finding an already existing project is even easier. Usually there are many places and people working on projects exactly like these that you can easily find if you know where to look. Contacting family and friends, visiting public libraries, going to local community centers and events, or asking around at work or school are all great ways to discover design projects, and most of them can use

all the help they can get. In today's age of covid-19, it may seem difficult to find a project with a lack of these many in-person resources. Luckily, with the wide accessibility of the internet you still have an endless amount of options for finding a great project to work on.

Design groups working on social change projects are abundant on the internet, with a countless number of groups tackling various issues on sites and applications like Facebook, Discord, Slack, LinkedIn, and MeetUp. In addition, many nonprofits and local organizations have their own websites outlining current projects they are working on with methods to contact them. Lastly, you can always take advantage of search engines like Google and Bing to look for design groups and projects.

2. Building relationships

One of the most important aspects of making design projects for change is building a network and relationships that you can use to spread your message and enact change. After all, it takes more than just one person to change public

Consider strengths & weaknesses.

By building partnerships with others you can accomplish more with less. When forming these relationships it is important to be realistic and think of exactly who/what organization you can partner with and what each of you would bring to the table. Whether you are creating your own project or joining an existing group it is essential to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each member and what assets they bring. Maybe you can serve as a teacher or mentor for someone else in the project, or as a student if you are looking for more experience in a specific area.

Construct a network.

If you enjoy working with your team then don't be afraid to ask to exchange contact information with them or to follow them on social media. Many designers also have other resources to share and borrow like design blogs, YouTube channels, etc. It is crucial to build a strong network of great workers, volunteers, and even donors to help on current and future projects.

Try and reach out to those most affected by your issue.

Creating a network is not just important for you to get advice and assemble a team, but also to reach out and find more groups and individuals that could benefit from these projects. For example, if you're working on a project that wants to get more customers to go to black-owned businesses, then contact some local businesses in your area.

When volunteering, don't forget to treat an organization like a highly valued client. After all you are learning and serving experts in the field!

Or if you want to get more people to vote then contact people that live or work in areas with low voter turnout. Not only can doing this aid in efficiently finding the best ways to help out with your issue, but it also teaches you about the root causes of the issue and allows you to meet new people from different backgrounds. By meeting new and diverse groups of people you can learn of even more ways to help your community and gain knowledge from the stories they share to you.

3. Start designing!

After learning how to find a project to work on and how to build a network, there's nothing left to do but to start designing. Although there are many areas and specialties in the field of design, there are a few general points that all designers should follow when working on projects for enacting social change.

These points are important to keep in mind while constructing your design as it allows you to make an efficient and effective design for your project. The American Institute of Graphic Arts' Mark Randall outlines great design methods to keep in mind:

Design for good

- Initiate a project or group that uses design skills
- Facilitate design thinking
- Establish a socially-engaged business or nonprofit
- Inspire a movement

Designers for good

- Observe and engage through social media
- Investigate and advocate for social causes
- Donate money or goods to an organization
- Volunteer time to a local organization or community
- Create a fundraising event for a local nonprofit

In addition to these great tips, there are some other things to keep in mind when designing. Make sure your design work is both something that you are experienced in, and something that you are interested in. By designing with your heart, it guarantees that you will be putting in maximum effort and talent.

Furthermore, it is imperative that you are using this opportunity to learn and persevere. Do not be afraid if your project or design fails! You can't let failure stop you from wanting to enact change. Design work is hard work, and it is imperative that you learn from your mistakes. Also keep in mind to document and share your work. A great way to get an audience to join your cause is through telling powerful stories. By documenting all the hard work put in by your team and members of the community, then you can reach an even wider amount of people and make more connections! Lastly, remember what or who you are designing for. Doing a design project for social change is about much more than looking good on a resume. Keep in mind the reasons you embarked on this project in the first place!

Make a difference

What makes you want to enact change? Change can be as simple as changing someone's opinion or as complex as constructing a reality that is unmet.



Working to save our planet from climate change



Fighting against inequality



Ensuring rights regardless of sexual orientation.



Making access to proper housing a human right



Keeping families together no matter their status or origin



Volunteering for Covid-19 mutual aid projects

Learn from others

Explore other projects that aimed to enact change for social or political good. Get inspired!



Design for Democracy

An initiative that uses design tools and thinking to increase civil participation. Find out more at: aiga.org

AIGA | 1998 -

The Southern Initiative



The Southern Initiative

An Auckland, NZ based project created to help solve social and economic issues in its local communities. Explore it at: tsi.nz

Auckland Council | 2012 -



Familias Separadas

A public art project in Philadelphia that aims to shut down abusive ICE facilities in the US. View the gallery: michelleangela.com

Michelle Angela Ortiz | 2017-

It's always time to act

After learning about how you can start your own design project for change or join an existing group, and thinking about potential issues you would like to tackle, it is now time to act. Whether you can only give up a few minutes a day or work on a project full-time, it is always time to act. Though change is hard to enact alone, it takes just one person to start a project that strengthens your community.

Remember, keep your best design principles on your mind, and don't be afraid of failure. Though making a large impact seems difficult, keep in mind that change doesn't happen in a day. As designers our mission is to learn about the experiences of people facing difficulties, and to use that understanding to rethink traditional modes of making change. Get started, find a project, build a network, and start designing!



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November, 2020