Embrace the Messy: Using Design Thinking to Get Moving on Assessment

Sarah Hansen, The University of Iowa
As a result of this session, you will be able to:

• Discuss the key elements of design thinking
• Apply elements of design thinking to everyday assessment activities
• Identify opportunities for embedded assessment in a current program or service
• Create effective, yet brief, assessment methods for capturing student learning
The main tenet of design thinking is empathy for the people you are designing for. --David M. Kelley
Design Thinking Process

1. **Empathize**: Learn about the audience for whom you are designing.
2. **Define**: Construct a point of view that is based on user needs and insights.
3. **Ideate**: Brainstorm and come up with creative solutions.
4. **Prototype**: Build a representation of one or more of your ideas to show to others.
5. **Test**: Return to your original user group and testing your ideas for feedback.
Key elements

• People focused
• Curious
• Collaborative
• Stepwise exploration
• Iterative
• Failure is normal and expected
• Improvement-oriented
• Focus on what stakeholders need
Why Design Thinking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding the mindset of people you are assessing</th>
<th>developing a deep understanding of needs and unmet needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider a wide and fresh array of solutions</td>
<td>avoid the pitfalls of a wrong fit for the needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transformative Assessment

• Assessment that truly informs decision making, resulting in substantive change in the learning environment.

– Paraphrased from Wehlburg, 2008
AAHE Principles of Effective Good Assessment Practice

- Assessment of student learning begins with educational values
- Most effective when it reflects learning as complex, integrated and revealed in performance over time
- Works best when programs have clear, explicit purposes
AAHE Principles...

• Requires attention to not just outcomes, but the experiences leading to them
• Ongoing vs. episodic
• Broad stakeholder investment needed
• Makes a difference when it is about things you truly care about
AAHE Principles

- Is our professional responsibility
- Most effective when a part of larger change efforts
Key issues for today’s higher education assessment community

• Linking assessment to employer needs (e.g., NACE outcomes)
• Providing assessment reports that have value to multiple stakeholders
• Better capturing knowledge transfer and complex thinking
• Translating findings into action

- Adapted from Benson and Dresdow, 2014
Why can design thinking help answer these questions?

• It is stakeholder-involvement rich
• It looks at problems from multiple viewpoints
• It reminds us that any solution (e.g., assessment method) is just one data point
Design Thinking Use in Assessment

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Journey Maps
- Ideation and Feedback Loops
Stakeholder Analysis – Exercise One

**Complexity of Delivery**
(depth of information, interactivity, etc.)

- **Awareness**
  - Aware and has sense of appreciation for the change. Provide information to inform of minor impact.

- **Understanding**
  - Understand the rationale and internalize the implications of the change for the business (e.g., new process) and for the individual (e.g., new expectations).

- **Buy-in**
  - Agreement with the concept and implementation path. Willingness to shift behaviors, develop and use new skills and approaches.

- **Ownership**
  - Ownership for the success of the effort. Willingness to invest and make decisions according to desired outcomes.

**Time**
### Approach for Building Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Awareness</td>
<td>Need them to be aware of Program events/status</td>
<td>Provide broad based communication</td>
<td>Communication effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and has sense of appreciation for the change. Provide information to inform of minor impact.</td>
<td>Need their participation in program events</td>
<td>Enable them to participate in focus groups, working sessions</td>
<td>Level of participation; Quality of feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Understanding</td>
<td>Need their support to move forward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the rationale and internalize the implications of the change for the business (e.g., new process) and for the individual (e.g., new expectations).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assign responsibilities to people in their areas; Enable them to validate team output</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Buy-in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement with the concept and implementation path. Willingness to shift behaviors, develop and use new skills and approaches.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take responsibility for implementation; Meeting milestones &amp; commitments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor/maintain execution; Ensure people are effective in new roles</td>
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<td>Ownership for the success of the effort. Willingness to invest and make decisions according to desired outcomes.</td>
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**Approach**

- Provide broad based communication
- Enable them to participate in focus groups, working sessions
- Assign responsibilities to people in their areas; Enable them to validate team output
- Make them accountable for execution in their area

**Metrics**

- Communication effectiveness
- Level of participation; Quality of feedback
- Take responsibility for implementation; Meeting milestones & commitments
- Monitor/maintain execution; Ensure people are effective in new roles
Who are the stakeholders for your (assessment) work?

• Begin to list as many of your stakeholders as possible.

For each stakeholder or stakeholder group:

• Determine which level of investment they should have (Awareness-Understanding-Buy In-Ownership)

• What do you know about their needs and preferences with regard to assessment information?
Journey Maps

• Helps you follow the path of a student participating in your program or service
• Can expose opportunities for embedded, direct assessment
• Helps gain empathy for a user’s experience
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Interaction Point (&amp; potential assessment point)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs up for workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise on first leadership experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Pre-Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minute paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Philosophy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nervous – am I a leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Could add reassurance to online pre-survey; Collect 5 minute papers and analyze themes – compare to pre-survey themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://bit.ly/1RkS9cx
Ideation and Feedback Loops

- Preliminary aspect of prototyping
- Can fail quickly and cheaply because you don’t create the whole ‘product’
- Let’s you test possibilities
- Ensures stakeholders are involved in the process
- Serves as formative assessment
Ideation

• Working quickly with your partner – write as many unique ideas as you can come up with to answer this challenge:

• “How might we design assessment that captures what students learn from student employment without sending out a survey?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback from:</th>
<th>Which Prototype?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User likes</td>
<td>User suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User wonders</td>
<td>User ideates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What gets you stuck with assessment?
Getting Unstuck

• Simplify
  – 3-2-1 assessments
  – 1,2,5 minute papers
  – Rubrics for performance
• Use design thinking methods
• Zero in on one stakeholder point of view
• Accept that being stuck is normal sometimes
• Invite collaboration
• Ask students
Resources

• Email me: sarah-hansen@uiowa.edu
• IDEO.org (Field Guide to Human Centered Design)
• Stanford dSchool (Use our methods)
• Design Thinking Comes of Age (Kolko, HBR)
Questions?

YEA!

Assessment rocks!