

Future Worlding for Service Design

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Workshop theme

Service design aims to take a comprehensive view in creating value and services, as well as to help organizations create mechanisms to deliver and support those services. However, very often service design practitioners do not have an opportunity to consider the implications of a new service in a wider context (social, economic, political). This oversight may also limit the ability to make a significant impact on how we design and create our collective future.

The goal of this workshop is to demonstrate how futures studies (also known as futures or foresight) can help service design practitioners (i) imagine possible future worlds, (ii) create services in the contexts of those worlds (iii) understand systemic implications based on the interaction of the service and the future world. During this workshop we will introduce some of the basic concepts of future studies and drawing from the decades of research in this field, teach and practice specific futures methods to the audience. These methods will then combined with more traditional service design tools (e.g. journey mapping) to demonstrate how futures can empower service design to deal with larger and longer-term change and how service design can help futures in imaging specific user interactions and services in an imaginary world.

Workshop description

The workshop will consist primarily of group activities with some theoretical background and case studies to help the audience familiarize themselves with the methods. First, we will warm up the audience to the idea of futures with an activity called the Polak Game. In it we will explore how people in the audience differ in opinions of how they feel about the future and how much control they have over it. This will be followed by a brief introduction in some of the basic concepts of futures.

Next we will move into the Worlding and Service Design exercise. In this exercise, the audience will be divided into teams and be given a description of an imaginary world. The way the worlds are constructed will follow a specific methodology, which we will also explain. Once the teams read the description of the world they will have to create a service for that world. The service will be the same for everyone (e.g. housekeeping or car wash).

What will be different is the impact of some of the characteristics of the future world on how the service is delivered. The teams will present these services using traditional journey map. The point is not to create a completely new service but imagining how an existing service could fit in a new world.

In the final exercise called Future News Report the teams have to create and re-enact a three-minute news story as if it is reported on TV. The story has to be related to the service that they have just presented. It could be an interview of a business owner or a customer of that service or an imaginary situation involving the service. The goal of this exercise is to start imagining wider implications of a service that the workshop participants have just designed. The news report format serves as a familiar medium, which also gives the stories some sense of credibility. In addition, the idea of reporting something “newsworthy” will also force the participants to create stories in which the service they design has some wider consequence. Teams will re-enact their 3 minutes stories for everyone to see.

In the final stage of the exercise, we will discuss the impact of the exercise and the frameworks on the participants’ thinking process and conduct a Q&A. The agenda of the workshop will be as follows:

Polak Game – 10 minutes

Introduction to Futures – 10 minutes

Worlding + Service Design Preparation – 15 minutes

Worlding + Service Design Presentation - 15 minutes (3 minutes per team x 5 teams)

Future News Report Preparation – 15 Minutes

Future News Report Presentation – 20 minutes (4 minutes per team x 5 teams)

Discussion – 5 minutes

The materials used in the activities above are flipcharts, printouts of journey maps sticky notes, markers. We will need a projector, computer connection, and multi-media speakers in the room.

Workshop outcome

The most useful outcome of this workshop is teaching the participants how to deal with the uncertainty and multiplicity of the future with the tools of foresight, and use these tools to imagine new worlds and service in them.

References

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