

Touchpoint

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Prototyping a Service Design Curriculum

Integrating Current Research in Teaching

This article describes how we developed a new service design curriculum and integrated current research into the courses. We did this by prototyping the service design curriculum together with our design masters students. The new curriculum is aimed at students who already have basic design skills and focuses on helping the students to reflect on the new challenges that service design brings compared to other design disciplines. Current research into the tools and techniques of service design has been integrated into the curriculum as a catalyst for the content of the courses given according to the curriculum.

Why We Needed a New Curriculum

Our curriculum from 2005 was a project-based curriculum, run as two courses: one in a design studio format and one with an information and communication technologies (ICT) perspective. The ICT course was withdrawn after a few years. The curriculum and the courses were

tightly interwoven with current research projects. In 2009, we decided to change the curriculum, with the aim of finishing the implementation of the curriculum in spring semester 2012. The rationale was twofold:

1. To restructure and modernise the service design studio course from 2005
2. To prepare the curriculum for growth over time, from courses with fewer than 10 students to those with more than 30 students

The outcome was a curriculum aimed at introducing service design to students who already have basic design skills, using a curriculum that can be easily adapted to fit class size and the design background of the students.

How We Did It

We began development by investigating various perspectives on service design in relation to the amount of design knowledge the students have when they take the service design course. All service design courses currently given at Linköping University are held at a masters level. Knowing which programmes students were coming from, we were able to assume that the students had basic design skills when starting the course. Therefore, the focus of teaching



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01. A product prototype aimed at improving a touchpoint of the service experience at a restaurant on campus | 02. Photos visualising research data collected during a design probe study

To let the students focus on visualisation techniques throughout their projects rather than in one segment, we specified which types of techniques students were to use in the different stages of the course. Various types of system and actor maps were used after the stakeholder research, whereas customer journeys and blueprints were used in the ideation phase. Finally, in the prototyping phase, students were instructed to storyboard their ideas before creating video prototypes.

Based on feedback from the first iteration, the ideation phase was extended in this course to highlight a more holistic design process. The students spent more time developing their service ideas by transforming insights from research into configurations of networks of value creation.

Insights from the Second Draft

As of this writing, we are in the final weeks of the course for Spring 2011, but some changes for the next iteration of the curriculum have already been identified. Primarily, we observed that, when given the opportunity to choose what to design in a given context, the students mostly preferred to develop new services rather than to design improvements to existing services. This had two consequences:

1. Students struggled with identifying all stakeholders of the new service models and had difficulty finding ways of visualising their insights from the stakeholder research

2. The students might get the wrong idea of service design practice. Most commercial projects are aimed primarily at improving existing services rather than generating new service ideas

For these two reasons, courses in the next iteration of the curriculum will focus on course activities where students consider existing services as their starting point. We will emphasise that idea generation should be made with respect to improvements, rather than radical innovation. We recommend that skills on improving existing services are seen as a higher priority than skills for coming up with new ones for students, in order to align learning with their future role.

How We Use the Curriculum

During spring 2011, the curriculum has supported us in the development and performance of a solid, pluralistic and multi-disciplinary studio course in service design for masters students in Design, and a more traditionally structured course for Design Engineering students. It has also been used to develop a micro-module in service design as part of a course on Industrial Service Development for students in industrial engineering. We are starting to develop the contents of a PhD course in service design, and will also use it for the module developed and given with the Business & Design lab in Gothenburg later in 2011. ●

References

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SERVICE DESIGN CONFERENCE SAN FRANCISCO

This year's Service Design Conference will take place at San Francisco, California, USA. The topic *From Sketchbook to Spreadsheet* is about exploring the critical relationship between service design and business. The call for contribution is open now! Watch the SDN website to stay updated!

Photo: Calibos, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Golden_Gate_Bridge_pillar.jpg

About Service Design Network

The Service Design Network is a forum for practitioners and academics to advance the nascent field of service design. Our purpose is to develop and strengthen the knowledge and expertise in the science and practise of innovation.

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