

IDEO (2004)

1. Observation

IDEO's cognitive psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists team up with corporate clients to understand the consumer experience.

Some of IDEO's techniques:

Shadowing Observing people using products, shopping, going to hospitals, taking a train, using their cell phones.

Behavioral mapping Photographing people within a space, such as a hospital waiting room, over two or three days.

Consumer journey Keeping track of all the interactions a consumer has within a product, service, or space.

Camera journals Asking consumers to keep visual diaries of their activities and impressions relating to a product.

Extreme user interviews Talking to people who really know—or know nothing—about a product or service, and evaluating their experience using it.

Storytelling Prompting people to tell personal stories about their consumer experiences.

Unfocus groups Interviewing a diverse group of people: To explore ideas about sandals, IDEO gathered an artist, a bodybuilder, a podiatrist, and a shoe fetishist.

2. Brainstorming

An intense idea-generating session analyzing data gathered by observing people. Each lasts no more than an hour. Rules of brainstorming are strict and are stenciled on the walls.

Defer judgment Don't dismiss any ideas

Build on the ideas of others No "buts," only "ands."

Encourage wild ideas Embrace the most out-of-the-box notions because they can be the key to solutions.

Go for quantity Aim for as many new ideas as possible. In a good session, up to 100 ideas are generated in 60 minutes.

Be visual Use yellow, red, and blue markers to write on big 30-inch by 25-inch Post-its that are put on a wall.

Stay focused on the topic Always keep the discussion on target.

One conversation at a time No interrupting, no dismissing, no disrespect, no rudeness.

3. Rapid prototyping

Mocking-up working models helps everyone visualize possible solutions and speeds up decision-making and innovation.

Some guidelines:

Mock-up everything It is possible to create models not only of products but also of services such as health care and spaces such as museum lobbies.

Use videography Make short movies to depict the consumer experience.

Go fast Build mock-ups quickly and cheaply. Never waste time on complicated concepts.

No frills Make prototypes that demonstrate a design idea without sweating over the details.

Create scenarios Show how a variety of people use a service in different ways and how various designs can meet their individual needs.

Bodystorm Delineate different types of consumers and act out their roles.

4. Refining

At this stage, IDEO narrows down the choices to a few possibilities.

Here's how it's done:

Brainstorm in a rapid fashion to weed out ideas and focus on the remaining best options.

Focus prototyping on a few key ideas to arrive at an optimal solution to a problem.

Engage the client actively in the process of narrowing the choices.

Be disciplined and ruthless in making selections.

Focus on the outcome of the process—reaching the best possible solutions.

Get agreement from all stakeholders. The more top-level executives who sign off on the solution, the better the chances of success.

5. Implementation

Bring IDEO's strong engineering, design, and social-science capabilities to bear when actually creating a product or service.

Tap all resources Involve IDEO's diverse workforce from 40 countries to carry out the plans.

The workforce Employees have advanced degrees in different kinds of engineering: mechanical, electrical, biomechanical, software, aerospace, and manufacturing. Many are experts in materials science, computer-aided design, robotics, computer science, movie special effects, molding, industrial interaction, graphic and web information, fashion and automotive design, business, communications, linguistics, sociology, ergonomics, cognitive psychology, biomechanics, art therapy, ethnology, management consulting, statistics, medicine, and zoology.