Evaluation by narration

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Why do we document, why do we practice pitching, selling ideas? How do we share and disseminate a design?

The role of stories
In human culture and interaction stories and especially storytelling plays a crucial role. We need stories to remember our past and to imagine our future. We tell stories to express our selfs as well as getting a better understanding of others. In the words of Richard Kearney: „Telling stories is as basic to human beings as eating. More so, in fact, for while food makes us live, stories are what make our lives worth living".

Introduction
If stories are such a central point to us how can it not by as important in design? In this presentation, I would like to discuss and illuminate the aspect of storytelling in design from three different sides. First I gonna talk about the small scale of generating and finding new ideas. Then we will have a closer look at stories in innovation of ideas and finally, I tell something about selling your ideas inside a corporation or in respect to your customers.

Generating ideas and innovating theme is strongly interdependent. Sometimes it is the same task. In other occasions, you start an idea by yourself and then continue working with other people for the innovation part.

1 Stories are fascinating

Generating ideas

This part is about finding new ideas and starting to build first prototypes. Most of the topics and methods in this section will be strongly inspired by James Auger's „Demo or Die". To do this, we use techniques and strategies from speculative design such as alternative presents or defamiliarization. But not as at speculative or fiction design the story must be grounded in the reality to match the audience's perception and memory of the real world. This point is crucial for the plausibility of the story and for convincing the audience.

„Alternative presents" are a great starting point. As Auger pointed out, the main goal of this method is to question and critique the contemporary use of technology. That means we can start working with existing technology and start asking questions about the usefulness or alternative ways of utilization. With this mode of operation, we can generate a reconfiguration of existing technology. One big advantage of this proceed is that the audience still has the chance to find a connection to their daily life.In addition, the designer has the possibility to build a working prototype and therefore create a more immersive aesthetic experience which can help build convincing arguments for the new product. In this kind of storytelling, the prototype plays a central role. By this means, Auger describes, we can overcome the oddness of this strange ideas. Which lead us to the motto, Demo or Die.

Another approach within this context of alternative presents is „Counterfactual and alternative histories". In short, taking critical points in our history and altering theme.
This specific technique offers the designer a rich narrative potential for reimagining and critiquing technological developments and contemporary products. The themes of the fiction can be extremely broad, from large-scale political events to very small differences. One example I really enjoyed and very well demonstrates this method is James Chambers' project about the „Attenborough Design Group (ADG)".

Attenborough Design Group
[4] The Attenborough Design Group is a fictional design group within the electronics company Texas Instruments led by the famous natural historian, cultural icon, and film-

4 Gesundheits-Radio

maker, David Attenborough, created by James Chambers and Tom Judd. It investigates the use of animal behaviors to defend emerging technologies. These products include the Gesundheit Radio, which sneezes periodically to expel potentially damaging dust, Floppy Legs, a portable floppy disk drive which stands up if it detects liquid nearby, and the AntiTouch Lamp, which sways away from you if you get too close to its sensitive halogen bulb. Chambers' project shifts the subject of the alternate history from socio/political events to a subject more relevant to the design industry, examining notions of object obsolescence, value, and meaning.

4 Floppy Legs

Innovating ideas

According to „Mobilizing Attention: Storytelling for Innovation", humans seem hardwired to process information in the form of stories. Stories are sticky, they persist, and they can be magnetic, attracting people and interest. This leads to the interesting question, how can stories and storytelling be used to inspire creative ideas and increase the pace of innovation? The writers also propose that stories focus people's attention on particular topics, aligning their interest and acting as the invisible driving force behind innovation. There are three main aspects, storytelling can contribute to co-design an innovatiion [2].

Exploratory Play
Stories can be, and often are, the key to the area of design play, the invention of new experiences, new features, and new products. When a story is told, listeners must make sense of the information conveyed and therefore are immediately involved.

Filtering
Proposed stories serve as models, and we can explore the implications of alternative designs on the stories and see where or how the stories no longer ring true as a guide for ruling out some alternatives. Stories are low-cost, high-impact ways to present information to groups regardless of their background or available resources.

Future-thinking Applications
Stories connect designers, users, and technology. Stories come to define where technology and users mismatch. Stories arise from new situations. Political, economic, and even weather changes result in new stories.

Consciously using stories as the driving force behind innovation and funneling group effort into useful, self-sustaining initiatives allows for long-term innovation. In that sense, storytelling can also be seen as a generative tool for co-design.

Selling ideas

Moving your ideas though an organization is not always easy and most of the time it is no enough to have a good one although it can help. Let's analyze what can stay in the way. A designer trying to get a feeling for the chances of his/her project must keep in mind four levels of decision influences, each of which may cause resistance strong enough to kill the project. According to Christopher Loch's „Moving your idea through your organization".

Strategy
„a fit with the business needs"
An organization has a legitimate interest in pursuing projects only if they support the organizations' priorities. The difficulty with that lies in the fact that strategic priorities can never be proven. Shelving projects are legitimate and necessary for organizations to maintain focus, and designers must realize and accept that, with out taking it too personally.This is part of designing in a business.

Politics
„interests of the decision makers and network of relationships and influences"
The strategic view of an organization pretends that the organization acts as a unit, a single entity that makes decisions to maximize its success. But most of the time, an organization is a coalition of partially conflicting interests.

This leads to two important implications for the designer who tries to get an idea accepted. Be informed about who has what interests, and see the organization as a network, in which power and influence are not completely mapped by the official hierarchy. Know who is allied with whom, so you can approach key players who then do your work and convince others for you.

Culture
„questions about legitimacy and appropriateness"
Culture defines, both explicitly and implicitly, „how things are done around here". What is the „appropriate" way of introducing such a project into the organization?

Emotions
"the players in terms of ego, reciprocity and group identification"
Apart from strategy, political alliances and cultural habits, people commonly exhibit three emotional needs. The first emotion is friendship and reciprocity. The second emotion is the feeling of loyalty and solidarity of „Us" against „Them". And third, people crave the stroking of their egos.

Loch suggests mapping the decision influence levels to sell your design. If you are trying to get a design idea accepted in a large organization, you can perform a mapping exercise to identify the selling points and the potential points of resistance that you are facing. The first two parts of the mapping are about the content of your arguments. Parts 3 and 4 of the mapping exercise are about the approach of „selling" the design idea to the organization.

1 DuoSport, flying car prototype

Lessons learned

Generating ideas is crucial. Ensure that your story connects with an identified audience's perceptions of the temporal world around them. These perceptual bridges can then be stretched in precise ways.

Many techniques from literature, like for example defamiliarization, alternative histories or presents can be used for finding new ways of seeing the world around us and extend our perception.

Storytelling can become a powerful tool if it comes to innovating ideas in teams. They can align the interests and the focus of the group members to a specific topic and therefore enable innovation.

Designers need to consider the contexts and goals of potential users to create their stories, narrative scenarios that describe how target consumers move through their lives to accomplish their goals, along with the challenges they face.

To realize ideas within big organizations we need to pay attention to four internal factors. Strategy, politics, culture, and emotion. It is not enough having a good idea, you need to convince the right people on the right way.

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