SESSION SUMMARY

Conference: SOCAP11, San Francisco, CA 9/06/2011

Panel Topic: Prototyping is not just for products

Moderator & Panelists: Jocelyn Wyatt, IDEO.org, Adam Dole, Mayo Clinic, Veronika Scott, The Empowerment Plan, Alex Gilliam, Public Workshop.

Design, Methodology, Approach: Reports and expert opinions from panelists

Main Panel Discussion Points:
In this fascinating talk about the importance of the prototyping process, Jocelyn, Adam, Alex, and Veronika talked about their experiences with prototyping in their respective fields from services to products. In the area of services, Jocelyn explained that prototyping allows us to make tangible abstract concepts and let us fail quickly to succeed sooner. "The way to get impact is through failure and failure brings innovation," she said. As part of this prototyping process, it is important to isolate variables and to learn from the findings of prototyped solutions because often our vision of an ideal solution is not in fact the ideal solution of the target market.

Adam explained how business models also benefit from this process. "Prototyping can help create a shared vision by letting everyone really experience and talk about the same thing," he said. His current job at Mayo is to create new services designed to encourage positive healthy and sustainable behaviors in an effort to ultimately reframe the healthcare value proposition in the United States from sick-care to health-care. To achieve this goal, Adam looks for new disruptive opportunities focusing on three main things:
1. Think big but act small - find ways to test things in small ways that don't require a huge outlay of risk, capital and buy-in;
2. Prototype your partnerships – find small ways to work together with big organizations without having to commit in huge ways, letting you build that relationship; and
3. Create a feedback loop - build in touch points to the prototype to be able to answer the key questions you need to answer.

Another important aspect where prototyping is key to finding impactful solutions is prototyping behaviors. Alex, a leader in the design of projects, tools and events that help people positively change the places they live, work and play, said that using imperfect materials (like decorating a giant chocolate cake to plan out a community park) lets people focus on the concept rather than on non-important details. But sometimes isolating the details and focusing on the concept that creates the most impact in people can be challenging, as evidenced by Veronika's impactful and inspiring story of her design process to create a coat that met the specific needs of homeless people. Her advice, "take [your] prototype to the streets" and "design a product for *emotion*, not for need." In the end, as Jocelyn said, "our ideal is not the target market's ideal."

Keywords: design thinking, business models, prototyping
Paper type: Review of conference panel.