

Admission & Student Engagement

Prospective Graduate Students

Design Thinking: After

September 21, 2016

Below are 3 lessons learned from the Design Workshop. Besides having fun, I also had bragging rights because our group, The Golgi Apparatus, won the 1st Place Award for the Inspire section of the workshop!

1. I mentioned needs finding and brainstorming before the workshop but these concepts are trickier than I first realized. I learned tools for needs-finding: observing by taking photos (when appropriate), starting with extreme users – the best and the worst, and looking for workarounds. People sometimes state needs in such a way that they also offer the solution – “I need a better, more ergonomic chair”...but is the chair the right solution at all? So, design thinkers must dig deeper.
2. How we design a solution depends on how we see the problem. Thus, understanding the user’s motivation is the most important part of design thinking. Given the same facts, some workshop attendees saw Chris, an extreme worst-case user, as not wanting to change but others saw Chris as wanting to change but facing an obstacle. How we, as designers, view Chris will affect how we design for Chris. Thus, we have to ask Chris WHY he does what he does and not make assumptions.
3. I understood the importance of storytelling, which is ironic because I’m a writer. During the workshop, we had to storyboard our idea – draw it out like a comic strip – or describe it with the constraint of space (200–500 characters). Other groups would rank us in the competition based on what they saw. Thus, marketing the idea in a few words or pictures was as important as the idea itself.

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