d.school Starter Kit: Intro to Design Abilities, Methods, & Mindsets

Instructor: Stanford d.school

Introduction: Framing Design for Artists

- Hello. My name is Seamus Yu Harte. I'm the founder of Only People, and a lecturer at the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, also known as the d.school. Essentially, I do the same thing at both organizations, help people remix how their world works through project-based learning experiences.

And, today, I wanna tell you about a project I designed at the d.school called the Starter Kit, and have played around with and remixed quite a bit at Zoo Labs. The Starter Kit is an opportunity to experience a medley of design abilities, methods, mindsets. You'll watch videos and learn what design looks like in the real world, as well as discover what design is by doing partner activities and discussions. In three hours, you'll be exposed to over 20 mindsets, methods, and abilities that are gonna help you apply human-centered design to everything you do. It was originally being designed for an in-person activity. And when the pandemic hit, we quickly shifted and applied design to our design work to create a Zoom experience. It's specially designed for people that want to introduce design to their students or colleagues in the workplace.

But you're an artist, you say. Let's talk about that. I met Vinitha Watson, the founder of Zoo Labs, at an event my team hosted at Stanford. We quickly bonded over the intersection of art and design. She emailed me shortly after the event to see if I'd be interested in facilitating a workshop at Zoo Labs called Engaging Prototypes. Like most things, I said yes before I knew what I was gonna do. And after about the third time I ran the workshop, it dawned to me that the language I was using was getting in the way of the lessons. For example, if you're in the control room of a recording studio and you're teaching Engaging Prototypes, before you even can get into a lesson, you have to make sure everyone's on the same page of what the words "engaging" and "prototype" mean. And as I was spending my energy helping everyone come to the same common ground around those words, I realized musicians already do that, and it's called a demo.

- "Prototype" in my world is a demo or scratch track, you know what I mean? So it's not that term, but it's the same concept. And I cannot get on a stage and do a rap battle if I have not done 50 of them in the neighborhood with the neighborhood kids. That's the prototype.

- I realized Engaging Prototypes is just another way of saying a scratch track or a demo, right? Something that represents the idea you're working on and helps other people get involved. If you take that same mindset of producing a demo for your collaborators to really help and give feedback on and take forward, you're unlocking the power of design. And now if you think, "Oh, we need to make a demo for our marketing strategy or our website or our business model," and you get comfortable with the idea of being vulnerable getting an idea up and out and letting feedback drive it forward, it's no different than producing a track. It's just producing a business model or whatever it is you're setting out to design. So if you walk away with nothing else from this workshop, I hope it's that you realize you already have the skills.

So how does it work? Well, the Zoo Labs team actually remixed the Starter Kit and split it up into two sections, module one and module two. I cannot stress enough the value of doing these exercises with a partner. But if you absolutely must do it alone, I'm sure you're gonna also get some value out of it. Module one will help you frame and then reframe a problem worth solving. This is a big part of design, making sure you're putting energy towards solving the right problem in the first place. If you feel confident that you have a well-framed problem, then you can hop to module two which will help you generate ideas and build towards a solution for your partner.

I hope you leave this experience realizing the creative abilities you already have and apply to your art, you can remix those and apply to your life, business, and everything else.