

[DTBI] DESIGN THINKING FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION

Introduction

Innovation is a fundamental requirement to stay in business today. Innovative firms create new rules that make more conservative firms obsolete. Innovation has traditionally been associated with new product introduction and innate features of creative people, however both are limited and risky views. Today there is ample agreement that sustained success demands applying innovation in any business aspect (Business Innovation, not just new products or services introduction).

Design Thinking is the innovation methodology behind the success of some of the finest Silicon Valley products, like the iPhone. *“Design Thinking for Business Innovation”* (DTBINN) will allow students to develop basic skills in creative problem solving based on Design Thinking (DT) to foster business innovation within organizations. These skills will be central in future managers, as they will be expected to have the ability to turn strategic problems into creative solutions and to engage people in the implementation of innovation initiatives. Yet, in dealing with unstructured problems and fuzzy contexts, some business students experience confusion and frustration, specifically those that come to class unprepared, since DT is not intuitive. Your learning in DT will start not when you discover new lands but when you see with new eyes. This demands adopting an open mind and changing attitude, otherwise the course will have a detrimental impact.

Objectives

The course focuses on the manager’s and leader’s role as an innovator and facilitator of innovation by others. The course objectives are:

- To learn how to introduce innovation focused on addressing human-centered problems and turning them into novel solutions.
- To learn how to develop a change program to foster design thinking, as driver of broad and continuous innovation in any organization.
- To learn how to assess key obstacles to creative problem solving and innovation management.
- To understand how to implement DT as an approach to managing business innovation different from the back-end process and technological innovation.
- To get an exposure and appreciate key management practices used by well recognized, successful innovating companies.

Content

The course is divided in two building blocks. The central one centers on design thinking as a problem-solving approach. The second, very brief, focuses on innovation management, and covers two aspects: innovation as a systematic approach, and the requests that managers face in their attempt to build an innovative culture. All of them are intertwined and central to translating innovation into results.

The Design Thinking phases are:

- **Inspiration.** Deep customer understanding. Identifying latent needs.
- **Ideation.** Problem reframing. Idea generation.
- **Implementation.** Concept development and validation (prototyping and experimentation).

The course will also cover how to link a vision of (strategic) transformation with strategic problem identification, as the springboard to launch innovation. This will show the critical role of DT and innovation in translating a Vision into Action.

Managing Innovation as a systematic and robust process, with a focus on DT:

- Top-down and bottom-up innovation processes. Front-end of innovation (from strategy to novel concepts) more than Back-end of innovation (From concept development to launching business initiatives).
- Organizing for Innovation. Managing key elements that surround the DT process. Managing people and change management in DT & Innovation.

Innovative culture and the innovation system:

- Traits and features of a design-driven culture. Culture in highly innovative companies (values, principles and practices).
- Key managerial skills needed to build a culture of broad and continuous innovation.

Methodology

The first block takes the view that innovative problem solving and design thinking can be learnt through repeated practice. In a first part, we will use lectures with exercises to apply the learnings and a simulation to help participants explore various methods and approaches of Design Thinking on problem solving. In a second part, with more advanced sessions, we will go deeper in the discovery of how to identify latent user needs, and how to use this new knowledge to generate new business opportunities and novel concepts.

A final block uses two case discussions and a lecture to shed additional light on the role of key factors (leadership, organizational factors, strategy, balancing daily execution and other) to drive the innovation capacity of established firms. The focus here is on the role of management in the process: how to make creativity and innovation relevant to top management; how to link strategy and creativity; how to implement a change program to nurture a culture of business innovation; how to overcome main obstacles along the process, and what is the management role in the attempt to integrate the different factors to foster innovation in a company, a given division or business unit (total estimated dedication hours around 37,5hrs).

Evaluation

Grades will be based on:

- Quality of class participation and contributions (45 %)
- The team assignment (in pairs) during the consolidation weeks (55%).

Active contribution in all two aspects, class participation and report, is demanded. Failure to fulfill the basic demands on any of the two aspects may seriously affect individual grading.

Make sure that you get familiar with the team assignment that you are expected to cover during the consolidation weeks before we enter into the On-campus weeks. You are expected to respond to a brief quiz -just to know your preferences on who will you interview during the Consolidation weeks- before San Francisco classes start. Please see a detailed description of the assignment at the end of this outline.

Competences

Basic Competences

CB6. Possess and understand knowledge that provides a basis or opportunity to be original in the development and / or application of ideas, often in a research context.

CB7. The students know how to apply the knowledge acquired and their ability to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their area of study
CB8. The students can integrate knowledge and face the complexity of formulating judgments based on information that, being incomplete or limited, includes reflections on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.

CB9. Students know how to communicate their conclusions and the knowledge and ultimate reasons that support them to specialized and non-specialized audiences in a clear and unambiguous way.

CB10. Students possess the learning skills that allow them to continue studying in a way that will be largely self-directed or autonomous.

General Competences

CG4-To understand and apply the mechanisms that generate an atmosphere of cooperation, communication, and trust among the members of a team or organization.

Specific Competences

CE34 – To understand and evaluate cultures of innovation and entrepreneurship within one's own business (intrapreneurship).