WEAVE
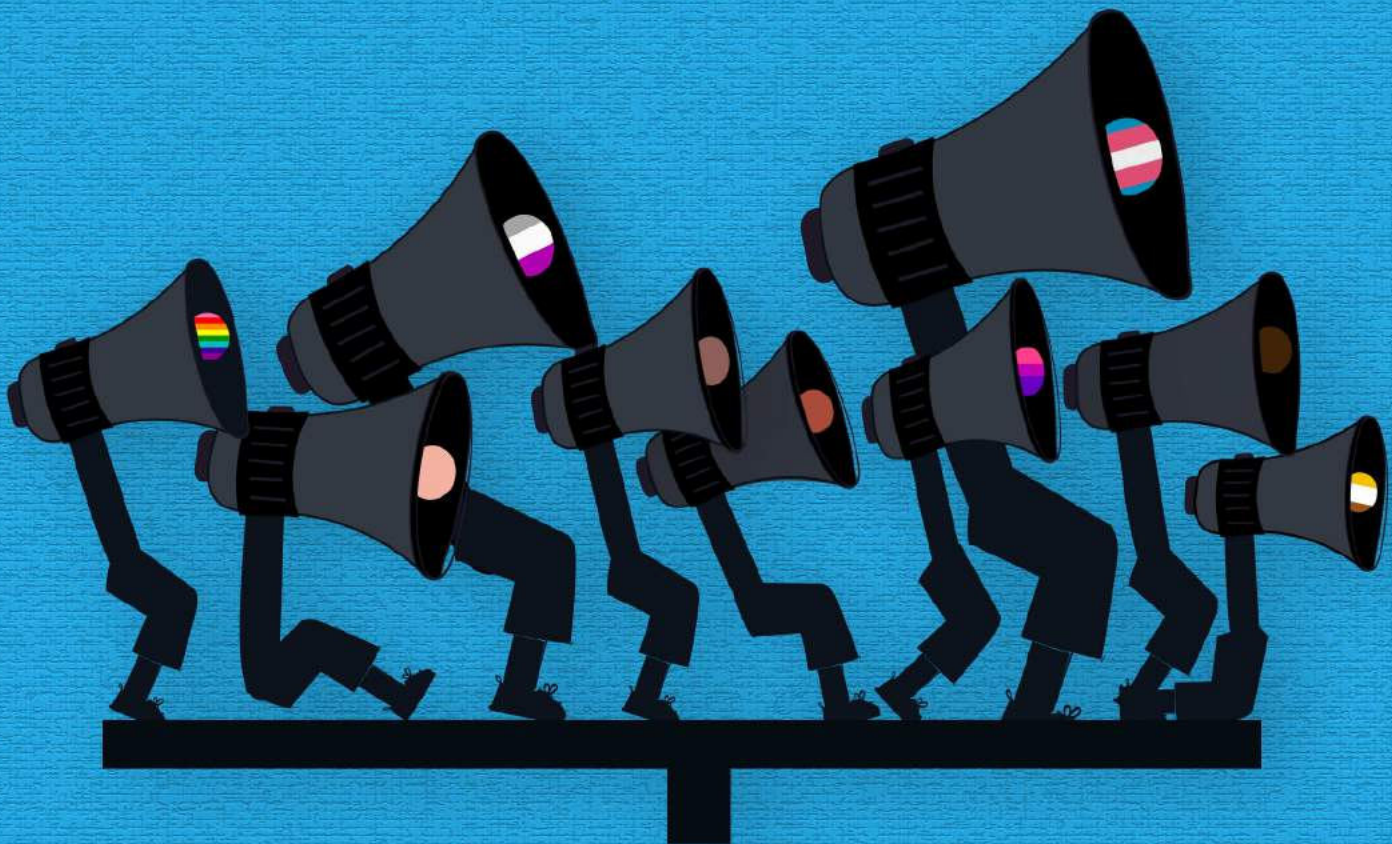
GAURI BARVE KALE

Co-founder & Director at
Therefore Design

SHAYAK SEN

Head of Design at Vedantu

Diversity Equity and Inclusion in
Design and Technology

VISHAL SHARMA

Senior Director, Capgemini

avantika
UNIVERSITY

JOAN PICANYOL

Creative Strategy Officer
at Mucho

Editor's Desk

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is at the heart of any prosperous team that builds purposeful products and services, reflective of the true world we live in.

It is time we learn of the capabilities and aspirations of those oppressed by society. Regardless of one's race, gender, ability, nationality, age, status or any other label, at the core we are all creative, ambitious, and have the right to be given the opportunity to succeed.

We are extremely excited to present to you a collection of insightful articles by illustrious leaders who really understand the significance and relevance of DEI at their workplace and for the world.

Joan Picanyol tells us of his experience branding 'Unlabeled'

for Levi's. Upasana Mukti shares her journey in building White Print, a magazine in Braille. Ninad Vengurlekar about equal learning and diminishing language barriers. Gauri Kale Bavre on gender and fitness food. Shashi Sudhanshu on inclusion of seniors at the workplace, are few among and many more such eye-opening topics and perspectives.

We also have a special segment called Changemakers featuring, as the name suggests, 10 drivers of change in India who are at the forefront of DEI. Truly an inspiring experience for all of us at Weave to have gotten a chance to interview the trailblazers of today, I urge you to check this segment out and read the complete articles on our Medium page.

Miral Zafar

Ishan Nakate
@@nustasthetics

Every voice, every perspective from every walk of life deserves to be acknowledged. If we make a genuine effort do so only then are we truly balanced with diversity, equity, and inclusion. Hence drawing actual solutions for real world problems.

Reach out to us on industryrelations@avantika.edu.in

Table of Contents
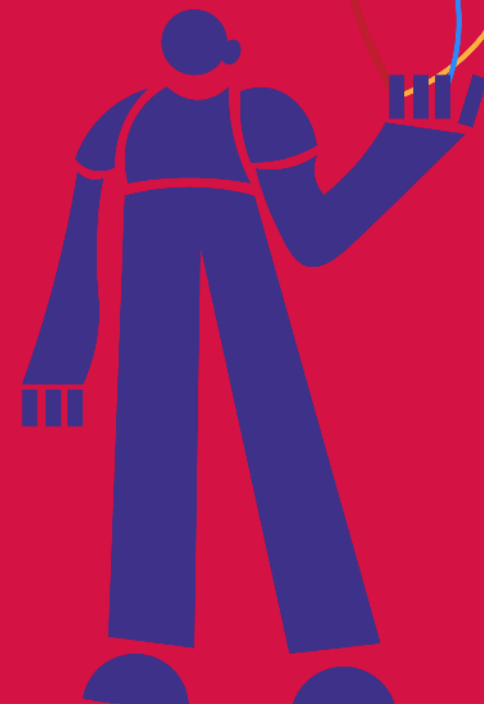
Designing a Solution for the Inclusion of Seniors

Shashi Sudhanshu
Co-founder and CEO at Eldr

Shashi is an Entrepreneur with immeasurable flexibility, patience, sales acumen, and tenacity. He is an avid traveler, an award-winning storyteller, and a technology enthusiast. He believes in talking about the solution rather than discussing the problem. His capabilities of continuous learning & unlearning from anybody & everybody is his success.

LinkedIn: Shashi Sudhanshu

———

Aging is inescapable but does not have to be insufferable, especially for a nation with 110 million aging citizens. At Eldr, this belief became our foundation while exploring the demographics of Senior Citizens in India. Our intent was to create a Design-led Ecosystem - a cornerstone from where we could outline elder-specific solutions. And, to do it thoroughly and systematically, we went back to the basics - the principles of Design Thinking.

Embarking on this journey to identify a design-led ecosystem, we discovered that Social Exclusion is one of the key pain points. With nuclear-family setups, living arrangements of elderly staying alone, and social indifference from younger generations, the segment feels more excluded and vulnerable.

It became the foundation of our ecosystem to identify opportunities and ideate our Service-design, with Design Thinking as our GPS. But before we explore the journey, let's make a pit-stop to understand why it is a proven approach to empathize with the consumer and build value.

Why Design Thinking To Route The Solution

Since the later part of the 20th century, Design has been an "Advertising Tool," adding a visual wrapper around an already conceived idea to make it look attractive. Fast forward to the 21st century, designers are also an inclusive part of the solution-ideation process. Today, teams are into a creative and human-centric discovery, followed by brainstorming, solution mood boards, iterative prototypes, testing, and modifications. It is Design Thinking in action, with breakthroughs and innovation built on a thorough understanding of consumer lives, leveraging design principles.

As innovators journey through end-user experiences, the outcome is a deeper understanding of the underlying problems. Interestingly, it brings to light facts that researchers might otherwise overlook. It is a similar experience we had, engaging into the discovery phase to understand the needs and expectations of our senior citizens.

Marrying Design Thinking To Market Study

To establish the ecosystem, we started exploring demographics (urban versus rural segmentation, class bifurcations, age buckets, etc.), understanding the challenges with closed group interactions, and

> **"It became the foundation of our ecosystem to identify opportunities and ideate our Service-design, with Design Thinking as our GPS."**

interviewing stakeholders engaged in elder care services. The insights of the discovery were interesting:

1. Respondents identified Elders as the target group who are near or above 80, having some medical conditions or are disabled in some way.

2. Care services were primarily provided to these audiences, on the ground of sympathy with their age/condition, but not factoring in their social needs and expectations.

Beyond it all, there was a sizable population of senior citizens, between 60 to 70 years, having a balanced lifestyle without health conditions or impediments. Our discovery identified the pain points of this segment where low technology adoption, indifference from the younger generation, and staying alone, made seniors feel excluded socially. They also wanted new experiences from life, which they were not getting from their surroundings due to prevailing norms. Yet, in the age of inclusive care and wellness-centric treatments, the focus of solution providers remained quite mainstream - building

"Old-age Homes," and planning "Senior Retreats." They had mapped offerings that might further the burden of social exclusion for elder groups.

Our Inspiration Became Business Aspiration

The plight of able seniors became our foundation to ideate possible solutions. The team was able to broadly classify their pain points into three categories:

- The experience of a Void in their lives.
- The need for Companionship.
- And the urge to remain Self-reliant to contribute to society.

Considering the marketplace for this segment, we observed that very little was being done by players to address the above issues. Hospitals, clinics, medical experts, not-for-profits - all were primarily concerned with physical health and mental care. Mapping possible customer journeys during brainstorming led to the realization that the intent should be to serve the lifestyle needs of elders. And that became Eldr's motto and positioning - a lifestyle platform to bring

joy to senior citizens.

And The Prototyping Kicked In

Human-centered solution frameworks allowed us to match the pain points with Three Pillars Of Resolution -

1. Engage, to address the Void with Activities and Entertainment.

2. Connect elders, encourage Companionship with like-minded people through Social Communities and Elder Matchmaking.

3. Enable as Concierge - Meaningful Content, Commerce Services, Doctor/hospital Admission, Attendant Services, etc ushering Self Reliance.

To drive this at a holistic level, the platform - now the Beta version Eldr App, was prototyped by the design team. We

---

"Our intent was to create a Design-led Ecosystem - a cornerstone from where we could outline elder-specific solutions."

---

took the product for a test run amongst target groups, having a series of interactions and opinion sharing. The current version brings together an umbrella of Application Modules addressing the pain points under the Three Pillars, the app combines all the offerings, accessible under a single dashboard.

The Real Journey Starts Here

The Service Structure is bringing together senior citizens from varied socio-economic backgrounds, tackling issues of social exclusion, and addressing the needs of the target market. However, the journey of Eldr is still in its nascent stage. With changes in climate, socio-economic practices, etc. there will always be a "next-big-challenge" impacting elder people's lives. Rest assured, armed with Design Thinking, there will always be a human-centered solution for us and other service providers, agencies, and product companies for the sector, and for other industries as well.
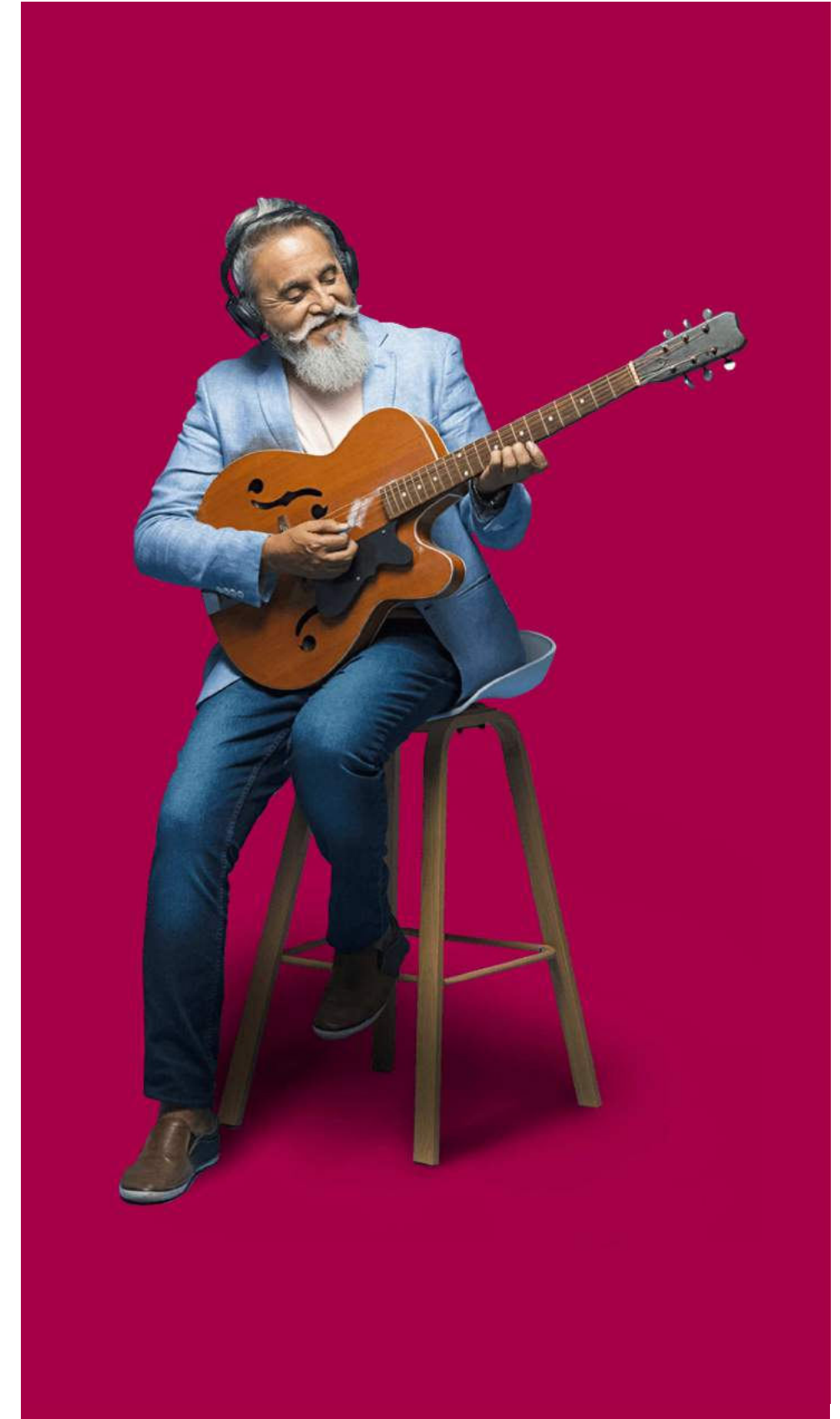
Joan Picanyol
Creative Strategy
Officer at Mucho

Joan Picanyol is the in-house brand strategy expert at Mucho. He has several international management degrees under his belt. His experience spans across a wealth of businesses and industries, both on the client side and as a consultant on the agency side. He has also served for 10 years as an executive manager in several cultural and public institutions around the world. He eagerly participates in knowledge sharing and exchange activities.

LinkedIn: Joan Picanyol

Levi Strauss & Co. Europe: Unlabeled People Make the Best-labeled Clothes

Levi Strauss & Co was founded on the values of empathy, originality, integrity, and courage; and it has been an active member of the social and civil rights movement throughout its centenary history all over the world. Recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of its employees is the starting point of bringing those values to life in one brand to represent the LGTBQ+ community within LS&Co and the whole company commitment to diversity and inclusion. Because of these values, LS&Co has never been afraid of diversity and inclusion or speaking up about it.

LS&Co desegregated its factories in the U.S. ten years before it became the law of the land. LS&Co was one of the first companies to offer domestic partner healthcare benefits, long before it was popular.

Today, LS&Co is a strong voice for inclusion, diversity, and giving everyone an opportunity to achieve their fullest potential within the company regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or religious preference. As Joan Calabia, Marketing Director of Docker's Europe

and one of the leading voices behind the project, puts it: "We know, deep in our soul, that diversity of all kinds is good for business and that a diverse organization will outperform a homogenous one every time."

In its continuing path to stand up for diversity and inclusion, Levi Strauss & Co. Europe has created an LGTBQ+ Employee Resource Group (ERG) to promote diversity and inclusion and contribute to creating a safe and fair environment for all.

> **"Diversity and inclusion are important drivers of a satisfying work experience and high-performing business results."**

Employee Resource Groups [ERGs] are employee-led diversity and inclusion efforts designed to serve traditionally underrepresented employee groups and create a more inclusive workplace. They are an excellent way for employees to stretch their skills as leaders, project managers, presenters, public speakers, and professionals. This group is open to everyone that will provide support and advice to the LGTBQ+ community while being a force of positive change, meritocracy, and authenticity for all.

In the words of one of the igniters of this idea (and now reality), Mr. Peter Lewin. Sr. Director of Strategy & Marketplace Insights, Europe: *"At LS&Co., our goal has always been to create a* *workplace where vibrant and respectful discourse thrives, and diverse voices drive creative and pioneering ideas to the top. That means constantly looking for new ways to cultivate an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and knows unequivocally that their contributions are welcome and wanted.*

Why does diversity matter? The business case is clear. We make apparel for everyone — and to do that well, we need the many communities that we sell to and work in to be represented in all levels of our business, from the sales floor to the executive suite. Diverse teams drive innovation, employee motivation, and revenues; a study by McKinsey found that companies with diverse leadership teams are 21 percent more likely to outperform non-diverse companies. Diversity and inclusion are important drivers of a satisfying work experience and high-performing business results. The latest Gallup research shows that the most engaged employees are those working in an open, fair and diverse environment."

The job was to brand and bring to life this beautiful and powerful idea. Levi Strauss & Co. contacted Mucho, and the goal was set. We needed to express it through a powerful concept, an inspiring naming, and a meaningful visual identity. Levi Strauss & Co. is one of the most legendary and universal clothing companies. One that carries many positive values but a label in the end. In the last few seasons, Levi Strauss & Co. had already launched a string of campaigns, initiatives, and collections supporting and celebrating the LGTBQ+ community. However, the ERG was meant to go deeper in terms of meaning and further in terms of inspiration to signify absolute inclusion and diversity.

Here is the concept and the name: to un-label all society labels and find out amazing unique individuals as diverse and authentic as one can get: Unlabeled.

A typographic logotype was created using the Levi Strauss & Co. corporate font, with an alteration in the form of the prefix "un." Two letters to unmake all labels and discriminations in society became the "un" symbol for the logotype. A rainbow thick line was used to underline the prefix in the logotype, which was also used as an element to mark the brand's messages.

Different words beginning with "un," were used to enhance the concept and inspire all company's stakeholders: united, unstoppable, unconditional, unlikely, unblocked, universal but also sentences like "Unlabeled people make the best-labeled clothes" or "Unlabeled people breaking stereotypes". Mucho supports the cause and believes every company should be a perfect workplace for anyone, no matter their sexual orientation or gender definition. For this reason, this one was a pro bono project.

Our hat's off to Levi Strauss & Co. Europe and its strong, visionary, and authentic Unlabeled Community!

One year after the brand launch, we are happy to hear Mr. Lewin say, *"Unlabeled has become a rallying cry for inclusion of all our people – each of whom is such a unique combination of experiences that labels* *simply do not do them justice."* Mucho hopes the case of Unlabeled shows, at least, a spark of the immense power of diversity to design, manage and live better.

Luvnit Sawhney

Head of Design at Money Tap

From end-to-end brand-building, and creative direction at BlindCloud to building delightful user experiences for many e-commerce platforms, Luvnit has always understood the importance of user research, empathy and design thinking.

LinkedIn: Luvnit Sawhney

Building FinTech Accessible to All

Introduction:

I have been building digital products in one form or another since I was in university. Whether I was building products for myself or for others, I quickly realised the power of an iterative agile design process coupled with understanding the user personas and their knowledge gap spectrum. Today I would like to speak to you about how I am currently building accessible and scalable FinTech products at MoneyTap.

1. Making UX design for Fintech products accessible to a diverse audience (larger market) from an inclusion perspective

A common misconception that designers have is that accessibility in design creates experiences, and products for differently-abled users. But in reality, it is designing products that make information clear and available to everyone, regardless of their capabilities or situation.

Besides designing for differently-abled users, being aware that even abled users can look at the same icon, color, or font and perceive it differently (Vision), different users can hear the same sounds and make other inferences for it, or not hear it all together, depending on their age, hearing ability or proximity to their device (hearing), users have different finger widths and dimensions which would result in understanding minimum touch target sizes for various users based on anthropological data so that they do not click on things by accident (Physical and Motor) or understanding that different words mean different things to different cultures or users depending on their exposure (Literacy and Learning).

To illustrate this, here is an example from MoneyTap; while we were getting ready to launch our app in Vietnam, it was important to the design team to understand how the local population perceives the in-app language. An interesting learning we found was that while asking for your salary inside the app, the UX writing was, "What is your take-home salary?" while this is a commonly used phrase in India, the

> "A common misconception that designers have is that accessibility in design creates experiences and products for differently-abled users. But in reality, it is designing products that make information clear and available to everyone, regardless of their capabilities or situation."

Vietnamese users were not able to comprehend it. The user had questions like, "We get paid digitally, so we do not take the salary home," or "Is take-home salary after taxes or before taxes?" Being clear and concise was the solution in this case. We then changed the UX writing to "What is your monthly salary, after taxes?"

Another example is how different cultures perceive color. In Japan, traffic signals do not have the red, orange, and green nomenclature that we are used to. Instead, they have red, orange, and blue. They use blue instead of green because the Japanese language does not have a word for green. This does not mean they do not see green; it simply means that they consider green a shade of blue, and hence what we perceive as green is blue to them linguistically speaking. This is a valuable piece of information when creating success states inside an app targeted to the Japanese market.

2. Access to finance impacts the equity at the individuals end to make users receive financial freedom

In many developing countries, less than half the population has access to formal financial services. Lack of access to finance is often a critical mechanism for generating persistent income inequality, as well as, slower economic growth.

Without inclusive financial systems, underserved individuals and small enterprises need to rely on their personal wealth, or internal resources to help them reach a state of financial freedom, which for many might not be possible because it takes a critical mass of capital for an individual to break out of various financial circumstances.

The core operating principle on MoneyTap, is that users can have access to money on a tap or money via the app when they need it. Without having to borrow from a loan shark or be obligated to a friend or family.

To facilitate this we have dramatically simplified the process of applying for credit to a few taps on the MoneyTap mobile app. Any individual, who has a smart-phone and a PAN, can check their eligible limit in less than 15 minutes

through the app. Once the credit line is issued the balance is available to the customer at no cost, forever!

With the no usage no interest feature, we have also made taking credit more affordable and fair. The user only pays interest on the amount they use.

While taking loans from brick and mortar banks you would have to comb through the documentation and paperwork to figure out the various terms and conditions of the loan that you are applying for or talk to a bank representative to help you understand the loans terms and conditions.

But in the spirit of equity, when we design products at MoneyTap, we clearly mention the fees, interest rates, terms, and conditions in simple English and throughout the customers' journey upfront and easily accessible to the user. This allows the user to make informed decisions before taking any financial jumps.

In addition, our organisation in partnership with its Lending Partners, follows strict lending

processes, including adherence to applicable regulations and the collection of KYC details before giving access to any credit.

We also smartly calculate the best EMI option for them, so that they are not burdened by the credit, and have enough and more breathing room to pay the loan back and benefit from easy access to finance.

It's great if designers have a strong sense of ethics and values that guide their user experience design. Designers should stray away from dark patterns that could lead the customer down a mislead user experience. As designers we should learn to marry the users' needs with business needs fairly and transparently.

In conclusion, understand that every product you design solves the user knowledge gap problem which is that the user currently has a knowledge of the way things work and they require a certain knowledge to operate your product. it is your responsibility as experience designers to bridge that gap between your users current

knowledge exposure and the knowledge required to use your product successfully.

You can do this by one of two ways. You can either:

1. Decrease the knowledge needed to use your product. **(Simplify)**

2. Increase the knowledge of the user to use your product. **(Training)**

> "Designers need to have a strong sense of ethics and values that guide their design and user experience. Designers should stray away from dark patterns that could lead the user down an unwanted path and learn to marry the users' needs with business needs fairly and transparently."

Knowledge Spectrum
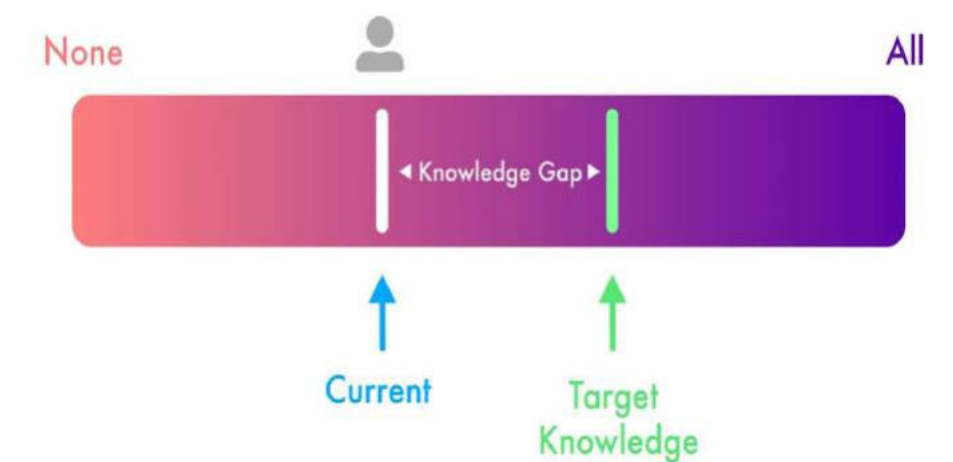
Concept taken from 'Riding the Magic Escalator of Acquired Knowledge by Jared M. Spool'

Gauri Barve Kale
Co-founder and Director
at Therefore Design

A designer with a discerning eye for detail and an incredible knack for numbers, Gauri can almost always spot that elusive 'needle in the haystack'. This is why she heads the design function at Therefore Design and closely monitors the quality of design that leaves the office. She is true to her motto, "Convince others only when we are convinced ourselves", thus ensuring that each piece of work meets outstanding standards.

LinkedIn: Gauri Barve Kale

Looking Beyond Gendered Fitness Foods with Foodstrong

Jaden Smith has made a name for himself over the past few years; not because he is the son of Will Smith, but because he unabashedly shatters gender stereotypes. From being the face of a Louis Vuitton's womenswear campaign, to launching a line of gender-fluid clothing, he challenges gender norms and is vocal about self-expression. His flair to carry off a skirt and make it seem habitual is what brands would perhaps do well to adopt if our world is to be more inclusive.

Modern-day brands have a huge responsibility in influencing consumer behaviour in favour of products that cater and appeal to both men and women equally. Even more, than you can imagine!

'Gender-neutral' is a buzzword that many marketers around the globe are now waking up to. With millennials and Gen-Zs who form a sizeable chunk of consumer markets worldwide seeking out genderless products, it is now time for brands to evolve and align with these expectations. This fact resonates with a study by Mintel that reveals, "Consumers are looking for products that meet their needs, not products that force them into traditional gender roles."

India's tryst with gender-neutrality

Historically, India is no stranger to gender-neutrality. Bygone dhotis and angarakhas, worn by men and women, have today made way for joggers, pants and oversized shirts for Indian millennials and Gen-Zs. Interestingly, this trend is not entirely uncommon to FMCG products either. Conventionally, brands like Oreo, Ariel, Colgate, to name a few, have delivered on their brand promise and prioritised architectural and structural design elements in their packaging over gendered communication. The 'masculine vs feminine' lines are gradually blurring for personal care and grooming products too. New-age Indian brands like WOW Skincare, MCaffeine, and Fastrack are slowly but surely following in the footsteps of international majors such as Tom Ford, Calvin Klein and M.A.C Cosmetics, all known for their inclusivity. While the pinks and the blues are steadily being relegated to oblivion in the fashion, personal care, and FMCG sectors, the same however can not be said of fitness and wellness brands, barring a few.

> "Consumers are looking for products that meet their needs, not products that force them into traditional gender roles."

Whey protein – a solid case for inclusivity

One quick look at sports stores or supermarket aisles that are teeming with large jars of whey protein, and it is obvious that these brands are almost always identified by their very masculine forms and communication styles. Over time, this has resulted in a subconscious and flawed consumer belief that whey protein is unfit for females and makes them 'bulk up'. Do you see the problem here? These brands have entirely alienated a potential and promising consumer group, who perhaps have the same fitness aspirations, as male consumers do.

Our on-going work with Foodstrong, a health food and beverage brand by Taramis Labs, has allowed us to explore how packaging can be made more inclusive for retail spaces. Rather than targeting a specific gender, we adopted a functional route and chose to stay true to the product's inherent properties and benefits.

Infusing retail shelves with colour and style

Through our research, we learned that the 'one-size-fits-all' outlook to whey protein packaging had overtime led to the emergence of an all-black dominated whey retail shelf. We also knew that our target audience was urban, affluent, well-travelled males and females, typically 18 years

and above, who engaged in physical activity such as gyming, running, cycling, and yoga at least 2-3 times a week.

Armed with this data, we set off to bust a few 'whey' myths. Thus, was born Foodstrong, a simple yet evocative and functional name that conveys the product's strength-giving attributes. We complemented this with a tight logo unit in turquoise green, emphasising the unisex nature of the brand.

We designed a vivid and premium colour system for the packaging for wider (genderless) appeal. Using coloured text against a white background for the Shake Shape range, and white text against a background of bold colours for the Daily Protein range, we created a distinction between the two product variants. Giving the packaging a balanced look and feel through a mix of colour, typography, imagery and iconography, we veered away from the stereotypical macho form. We then carried forward this language, inside the packaging for the inner sachets, and the thoughtful note cards addressed to the buyers.

From our insights, we had learned that mindful consumers almost always inspect the content on food packaging before making their purchase decision. They go over the claims and labels with afine-tooth comb to ensure these fulfil their needs. Thus, to differentiate Foodstrong from its competition, we used a clever mix of typography plus copy and eliminated cliched vocabulary such as 'Ripped', 'Gold', 'Bulk', and 'Mass Gainer', all potential gendered cues.

Finally, breaking away from the ubiquitous bulky pet jars, we used a smart and sleek paper or cardboard tube. This allowed us to reach out to a mindful audience, both men and women, who sought clean food and clean packaging, while also lending the packaging an international look and feel.

In conclusion, it takes courage to be a Jaden Smith of brands. Challenging stereotypes to stand apart from the competition is certainly not easy. But, good and perceptive design can help achieve that, by creating inclusive brands with a wider appeal.

Dhananjay Shahane
Design Director &
Co-Founder ID LAB LLP

Dhananjay Shahane and Shrish Bhagwat co-founded Isomorphic Design Lab LLP and partner company- Invious Systems Pvt. Ltd. for commercial implementation and software development of IOT. Dhananjay has global experience in product design and development. More than 25 years of experience in consumer electronics, computer peripherals and printers, health care products, and more recently, IoT and interactive kiosks. His work involves several innovative products and global patents. Dhananjay and his team have been involved in the Design clinic scheme by GIO, NID, and MSME clusters driving MAKE IN INDIA as a strong import substitute.

LinkedIn: Dhananjay Shahane

Using Multicultural Knowledge for Creating Scalable Products

In the modern-day design world, 'Data Analytics' and 'Frugal Innovation' are the two keywords that have gained much importance. In consumer, healthcare, telecom, or any other industry verticals, frugal innovation has become a significant part of the growing trend. Creating below-the-radar inventions that devise low-cost solutions to local problems, often born out of necessity by using bespoke technologies of their creation. However, what lagged was designing services to support the changing market need. That is where the idea of creating a company in the designing space was conceptualized. This marked the beginning of Isomorphic Design Lab in 2015.

Design Entrepreneurship – The Way Ahead

Based on the principle of the Innovative and Affordable Design Intervention ID Lab's success clearly defines its noble mission to make better affordable products. Generating robust growth at a brisk pace on a small base, it has been able to add clientele and retain its clients successfully. A recipient of India Design Mark, the company has aided its clients to register three patents and earned recognition for good design. Taking up the challenge to promote design, ID Lab has partnered in a Design clinic scheme run by NID and the Government of India.

As an investment in the future, the Isomorphic Lab's team wants to nurture design entrepreneurship and create a new product-based business line for tier 2/3 manufacturers.

The Internet of Things has been a buzzword in the retail industry for several years. Whereas, affordability and its user-centric approach have been evolving very recently. Post COVID-19 pandemic, using technology for consumers assuring them safety and simplicity has been pivotal for many companies to restore their businesses in new ways. Phygital and Hybrid marketing is providing a unique platform for all genders. AI and VR will be the future of this industry.

ID Lab has developed several innovative solutions for its associates and product range to deliver this unique user experience. Not everyone is tech-savvy. Removing the fear of using technology from the consumer's mind is a way forward for digital India.

> "It is based on the simple principle that designing for the broadest range of people creates better designs and benefits everyone."
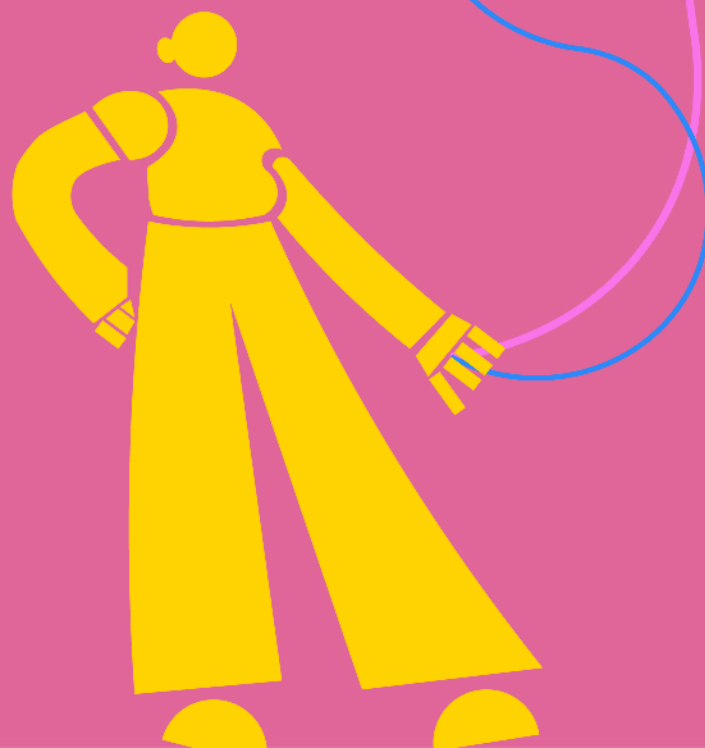
Inclusive Design Approach – A Case Study

Introduction

Inclusive design makes products, environments, and spaces usable by everyone, regardless of age, gender, ability, and circumstances. It is based on the simple principle that designing for the broadest range of people creates better designs and benefits, everyone. No costly retrofits, happy users, and great designs. It is a different approach than designing for people with special abilities.

The inclusive design process might not always lead to universal design. You are creating multiple access points for the same product; a diversity of ways for people to participate, so everyone has a sense of belonging.

"Disability is not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives." –World Health Organization

Disability happens at the points of interaction between a person and society. Disability is not a personality attribute or a health condition, rather, it is a mismatch between the individual's needs and the product, service, environment, or social structure offered. As a designer, it is crucial to understand how different people will use their products. Inclusion becomes the most critical aspect.

Smart Assistant - Insync shop fittings

At ID LAB for the last five years, we have designed over twenty-five products and bagged over five patents for our clients.

Extendable Mop - GALA **classic example**
It is a tough challenge to redesign a product that is used daily by every person and has evolved over centuries. It is not about the product price but perceived value by the end-user. The product has to be multifunctional and affordable to be successful in India.

Designing products such as a mop - for housekeeping staff, maids, and house owners will be different? If the answer is yes, providing a solution that caters to everyone's needs should be the right approach.
• Ergonomics – achieved through log stick of broom, no bending .
• Occasional cleaning is a nightmare at every house.
• Quick sweeping – time is critical for maids, durable mop that extend and clean ceiling webs regularly with ease without a ladder.
• Technology in recycled plastic broomsticks and replaces natural grass,

there by sustainable design.

IoT enabled smart retail assistant is another example. Post lockdown, now retail shops and malls are opening, bridging the gap of physical and digital spaces. Making intelligent choices for its consumers and having more sales generated through cross-selling and up-selling. Achieving this by using technology was a challenge. Wi-Fi, Bluetooth connectivity, Bar code, and RFID for managing inventory have been available for more than two decades.

Effective use for improving sales and managing inventory remains a hurdle. Giants like Amazon stores, Decathlon, and other companies have been doing this, yet it is far from common grocery, Kirana, and small retail shop owners.

ID LAB has developed a smart assistant that brings out every interaction and provides necessary analytic data as well. Replacing and reducing human intervention is achieved through technology. Inclusive design approach has helped us in a big way to cater to everyone's needs.

Mop- Courtesy Gala Frudenberg

Jill Chheda
3rd year UI UX Student at Avantika University

LinkedIn : Jill Chheda

A Curious Mind's Journey

"If you ever have to choose between people and money in your life then choose people and make connections because they will help you go ahead in life, not money"; My father said this to me before I started my journey in 2018. Since then, I have felt driven to express my thoughts and ideas and listen to others while having constructive and incredible conversations. Connecting with people became therapeutic for me, it led to my participation in the Reap Benefit Fellowship, where along with my teammates, I worked on a project on bio-toilets for villagers. Numerous journeys took place while researching for the project, including going to the grassroots and talking to the late Padma Shri awardee's

son Mr. Jayesh Patel. He infused us with his knowledge, insights, and beautiful stories. I learned that problem-solving and connecting with people and understanding their process was something that excited me. Hence, I chose to pursue UI/UX.

User Experience has sown a seed of importunity in me. It always keeps me driven to try out new things and build upon my human skills. I once read in an article that 'U' in UX stands for Unicorn (metaphorically), and being a unicorn, you ought to have knowledge of various backgrounds and fill gaps in your knowledge. I wholeheartedly agree with this statement, "Master of one, jack of all." As a student, I like to participate in numerous

hackathons and contests and interact with people from various domains with varied perspectives. MIT COVID-19 challenge: India turning the tide was one such hackathon where I participated for some excitement to pump up myself. I came across people from all over the world. The team that we built by pitching and talking to each other during the competition consisted of students from different countries and backgrounds, but one thing that was common amongst us was that we were there to give our 100% and have fun. We ended up being one of the winners of the competition, which was unexpected. We assumed since we did not have any experienced person on our team, our chances were slim.

After winning we realized that although we lacked experience, we made up with fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Believe in the journey and work towards the details. A curious mind will always reach its goal.

My mentors have always taught me to be curious about things because human idiosyncrasies and behavior will always make you question 'why,' and as you start finding those answers, you will come one step closer to a good design. One such thing happened when I was pitching my solution in a competition. It was a gamification model and the Octalysis framework. During the pitch, I was asked 'why,' and by the end, I received an impressive remark for my answer. These little things add up in my learning and train my thought process to become better each day.

> **Human idiosyncrasies and behavior will always make you question 'why' and as you start finding those answers, you will come one step closer to a good design."**

Decoding Relevant Education to Build Better Careers
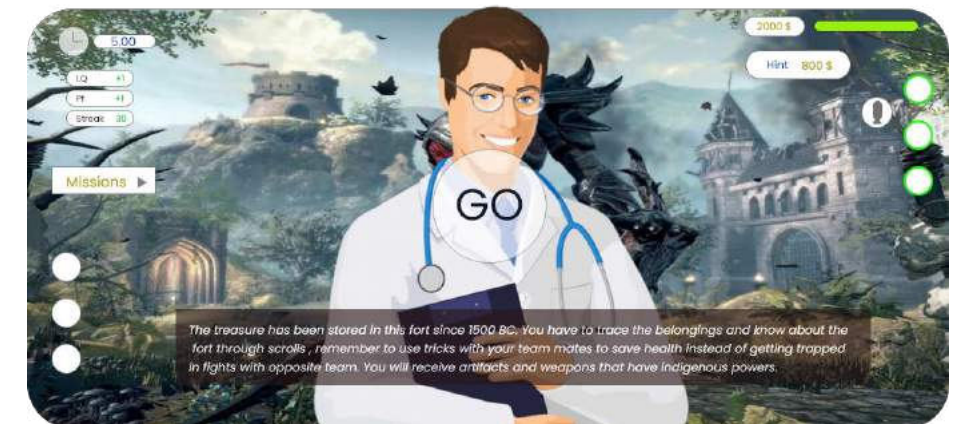
Mitul D Thakkar
Co-Founder & CEO at GreyAtom

With his bag always full of creative ideas, Mitul is extremely passionate about startups. He has what it takes to drive a business from its concept to MVP to product and even scale. Mitul is a very ambitious, dedicated, productive, and result-driven leader. As a thoughtful individual, he has a unique quality to make deep human connections and can easily build a community around him.

LinkedIn: Mitul D Thakkar

Quality education, which derives the outcome as required in the industry, is always a challenge. This problem exists for decades now. With the changing economy and the agility of the work environment, this problem is becoming evident. Organizations are undertaking innovative ways to hire and retain talent in this era.

Through this article, I would like to highlight how organizations are looking at talent, as well as what students, and institutions must do to stay relevant.

Organization's View Point

College Degree is not Enough
Organizations started believing that getting a degree is easy. Except for few distinguished institutions, organizations see everyone with the same lens. A college degree is just one of the filtering criteria; the real entry needs a much tougher practical test.

More focus on Real Portfolios
Real portfolios and real project work are the biggest criteria for companies to filter out the candidates. They want to see real work, even if it is a part of academic projects.

Practical Approach Towards Hiring
Most companies take a fundamentally practical approach towards hiring by selecting candidates via hackathons, real-world problem statements, and detailed soft skills interviews.

Focus on Constant Up-skilling
I am from a technical background and can talk from that viewpoint. The technology landscape is changing at a rapid pace. Topics like AI, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Digital Skills, Blockchain are taking over everything we do. It is practically impossible for organizations to expect such skills from the candidates. Hence, these organizations have started investing in constant upskilling, and it is becoming a culture. Potential students need to have a super high learnability quotient.

Student's Plan of Action

Alternate Learning Route while in college
Start learning from the alternate route while in college. This is the best time to learn, as students have the freedom to invest infinite time in learning. Utilize MOOCs, Youtube, Alumni Network to find the learning path and build on it.

Focus on building a portfolio
Learners need to focus on building their real portfolio of work. This helps them showcase what they have worked on to the potential employer. This is the most important aspect of getting hired in a good organization.

Develop a Learning Mindset

The technology landscape is changing fast, potential learners need to adapt to the speed. Developing a learning mindset is the key here. There are many ways to do it. Most importantly, learning to apply and accepting feedback is the most critical factor.

Do not ignore the soft skills.

Soft skills are the most underrated element. Students often focus on hard skills but do not focus on soft skills like time management, communication, presentation, networking, etc. These skills are equally crucial to any organization as well as to the success of individual learners.

Recommendation for Institutions

Leverage External Resources

Many institutions are taking a route of using MOOCs and other online courses to be added as part of the core curriculum. This is the best way to build the most amazing curriculum for the students to generate the outcome.

Blend Academia with real-world professionals have real-world professionals, CXOs, practitioners work with institutional teachers to teach certain subjects. This way, students will always get real-world perspectives.

Constant learning and unlearning is the way to build a better and brighter career for students.

On top of all the above, consider events like COVID. Post-COVID, we will see tremendous uptake in remote jobs. With this shift, organizations would be comfortable hiring anyone in the country and beyond. So as a potential employee, you will have choices much beyond your local reach. This is both, an opportunity as well as a challenge. The opportunity is to work with a global organization from your home country, and the challenge is to work remotely with the same dedication and outcome.

Overall, I am a firm believer that digital skills will change many jobs today. We may see many jobs that do not exist today, and we will see an end to a lot of jobs available today.

> "Constant learning and unlearning is the way to build a better and brighter career for students."

A Diversely-abled today

Upasana Makati
Founder, White Print - India's
First English Lifestyle Magazine
in Braille

Upasana Makati is a Mumbai-based entrepreneur, founder of White Print, and activist for the visually impaired. In 2016, she was named one of Forbes India's 30 Under 30.

LinkedIn: Upasana Makati

White Print began just as a thought. I had no close relations with the visually impaired community before White Print, nor volunteered at any organization working for the same. I wondered why something like this did not exist and took the opportunity to do my own research and understand the people of this community.

The inception of White Print

I just thought about how a person who cannot see would read, I knew it must be Braille, but the question was, what do they read? Is there a newspaper or magazine? I scoured the internet, called my friends, but I did not come across any such product, and it was worrisome. I needed to dig deeper to understand the issue; I spoke to people from NAB (National Association for the Blind) and asked them questions like, do blind people not want to read such publications? Is Braille redundant?

Once I spoke to them, I understood that they did want magazines and other publications in Braille but did not have access to it. Many people from the community urged me to bring this idea of White Print to life. Interestingly enough, most of the people I spoke to gave me the understanding that they were tired of being sympathized with, and that was when I decided that this magazine would be a for-profit venture.

It took me about three months to complete research, speak to people and understand the situation, and within eight months of resigning from my job, I formally launched White Print in May 2013. What I realized is that they are no different from us. They only consume content in a distinctive script. Apart from that, their consumption patterns, the kind of entertainment they like and dislike, is the same as someone who may be sighted or have hearing loss. People have created barriers in their minds,

and society functions based on outdated perceptions. For me, it is about challenging these norms and perceptions, the content I choose to put in the magazine or on social media, in approaching advertisers and businesses, and the image I portray to the sighted community that has conveniently built a lot of perceptions and preconceived notions. It is more about spreading awareness that will help people understand better and even help other entrepreneurs building products or services for people with visual disabilities in

> **"We want to create more inclusive and diverse literature for children to help them understand diversely abled people from a young age and help create an inclusive tomorrow."**

understanding their target audience better.

Obstacles and learnings through White Print

The biggest thing that I have learned about entrepreneurship is that you need to have conviction about what you want to start. I was always confident and convinced about launching White Print. Today resources and networking have become much more manageable. What took me four years to build could be built in four months by someone starting now.

In my journey, difficulties came to me in the shape of advertisers. I had to start from scratch to convince businesses to work with White Print. Most had never advertised in Braille before. I needed to make them understand that their advertising strategies did not need to revolve around graphics and colour; they could create impactful ads in text and would just be communicating in a completely different script. When I reached out to the government to ask them to advertise their policies with us, I found out that the government had no policy on advertising in Braille or with Braille publications; it

is still the same today.

With the pandemic, it would be harder to get larger corporates to advertise with us. I explored a new strategy; I would invite smaller entrepreneurs, mid-scale brands, and upcoming brands only for Rs. 5000. They found it interesting to come up with an advertisement in Braille. Convincing people to take money out of their pockets to advertise or do things for visually disabled people is still a challenge today. Unfortunately, in India, everything related to people with disabilities is deemed fit only as a charity; we are not a it difficult to convince businesses to work with us.

Some advertisers that we have gotten so far were Coca Cola, Tata group and Fevicol.

The success of White Print and their future goals

People often ask me, 'What is the point in a print magazine when everything is online anyways? My reply to them is, 'why do books and newspapers exist? different people like to consume content in different formats.' What we try to do at White Print is to give sightless people a choice in the format they want to consume content.

The success of White Print lies in its readers and their feedback, the fact that they continue to purchase

and enjoy the magazine. During the lockdown, I got a call from a reader in a village of Maharashtra saying he was able to press on through the lockdown thanks to White Print. He read through previous editions of the magazine to keep his spirits up. These interactions tell me that we are doing something right. Every few weeks, I would get supportive messages from our readers saying that they understood why we were unable to supply them with copies and that we would make a comeback soon.

In the future, my goal is not only to keep the magazine going but to also explore more about literature for children. Throughout this lockdown, we have released multiple children's books online and in Braille. I wrote a book named 'Run Saba Run,' a story that breaks myths about people with disabilities who play sports. We want to create more inclusive and diverse literature for children to help them understand diversely abled people from a young age and help create an inclusive tomorrow.

Inclusivity and universal design

These days we are more conscious about universal design and accessibility for products. An instance where I saw a positive impact was when we made a tactile alphabet book called 'Tactabet'. A school that supported children with special needs like autism and blindness used this book to teach the alphabet. Some adults used this book as well.

A hostel with girls above 18 had also bought this book. The person in charge told me that the girls did not

even know how to sign their names, but our book enabled them to learn English Alphabet. Tactabet has large raised tactile letters and is written in Braille as well.

To me, universal design is when you think more broadly, analyze who will be your users, and not stay in a bubble catering to a specific audience, incorporating accessibility while building rather than working on it after the product is complete. It is about using the little steps incorporating accessibility into existing designs rather than creating something

there are many invisible ones, almost everyone has some diverse ability, and we must acknowledge them. We should try to accommodate more diversity in our workplaces and teams as well.

It is essential to encourage dialogue and interaction between the disabled community and the abled community, especially from a young age, to let children ask difficult questions and challenge perceptions. Small changes, when made collectively, will help us make a more inclusive society.

"It is essential to encourage dialogue and interaction between the disabled community and the abled community, especially from a young age, to let children ask difficult questions and challenge perceptions. Small changes, when made collectively, will help us make a more inclusive society."

-Written by Suchira Biswas

from scratch and working on accessibility at the end.

Issues with inclusivity and what we can do today

There are far too many loopholes in our basic infrastructure, the content we create, and even educational resources. The government does not actively participate in creating accessible solutions for these problems.

Solutions towards equity and inclusion begin with us; there are many simple things we can practice by ourselves each at our own levels, such as using alternative text, descriptions, and lesser emojis on social media and making sure that your website or profile is accessible, and make it more barrier-free. Not every disability is visible;

"To me, universal design is when you think more broadly, analyze who will be your users, and not stay in a bubble catering to a specific audience, incorporating accessibility while building rather than working on it after the product is complete."

Arunachalam Muruganantham
Founder and CEO at Jayashree
Industries

LinkedIn : Arunachalam Muruganantham

Learning the Power of Conviction with Arunachalam Muruganantham

The dire conditions of women's hygiene during menstruation have been neglected for eons. Said negligence has not only increased the bias against this rather significant matter but has also proved to be hazardous for women's physical well-being. Despite these societal challenges, the CEO and founder of Jayashree Industries, Mr. Arunachalam Muruganantham, is striving every day to find a solution to this and bring a change to our society. He has given thousands of rural women access to

affordable sanitary napkins.

While the process of conceiving an idea may be difficult in itself; the ability to execute it is a different story altogether. Having information of a domain may be very beneficial, but it also instills fear in an individual. In his opinion, this is where our education system should play a more effective role. The ability to unlearn on an individual level and moving forward with what is relevant - is the training our young minds need.

Only information makes you impotent. Possessing knowledge out of that information makes you fertile.

He has created a market of more than a billion dollars today without procuring market shares from any existing giants. He states that these large multinational corporations are not aware of the ground reality. They are not connected with the common people and therefore do not understand their needs, and this is the aspect where he excelled. His product has

made menstrual hygiene a movement in rural areas and has empowered various rural women to launch their own brands.

He wanted to provide women a livelihood opportunity and a chance to live with dignity. To aid that cause, his organization has built an ecosystem to help women become monetarily empowered and independent. Having equal planning and decision-making power as a man is true gender equality, and only education and financial independence can achieve that.

Written by: Jigyasa Dixit and Nikita Sharma

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Ashaita Mahajan

Co-Founder - Café Arpan, Mumbai

Trustee - Yash Charitable Trust

LinkedIn : Ashaita Mahajan

From the Spectrum of Inclusivity

It takes a lot of love to build an environment or space that accepts people across diversities equally. While the world can be a very perplexing fast-paced place, a space like Café Arpan, run by differently-abled people, acts like a safe and inclusive space providing a therapeutic experience to its customers through the common denominator of happiness - food! We got into a conversation with Ashaita Mahajan along with her cousin sister Aarti Nagarkar. Ashaita is the co-founder of Café Arpan; her biggest inspiration is Aarti, whom she has grown up with.

Aarti is a person with autism, and they share a beautiful sisterly bond - which is ever-growing with their shared love for music! Café Arpan is one of the initiatives of Yash Charitable Trust - a non-profit organization with a vision to provide opportunities to PwIDDs (persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities) to live and work in the community of their choice with dignity and self-respect.

Yash Charitable Trust focuses on working with adults with autism, Downs syndrome and other intellectual disabilities to provide them with an enhanced quality of life. These disabilities occur at birth and are lifelong. People who fall within this spectrum are just differently-abled; they perceive and process the world a little differently than others. PwIDDs are capable of many things - all they need is the opportunity, support and guidance to achieve what they set out to do. "The idea is to focus on their abilities - what they can do, what they like to do, what they want to do. We ignore the disability and consciously focus on empowering the individual to live the life they want."

Café Arpan in itself stands out as the perfect source for awareness and advocacy. It is a live demonstration of how capable PwIDDs are if they have the opportunity. They may view the world from a different lens, but that does not make them any less than the rest. Sometimes seeing things from a different perspective can lead to new ideas, new experiences and new beginnings. They hope that many such inclusive spaces open up everywhere in the world, and persons with these disabilities are deservedly given the opportunity to shine!

-Written by Nikita Vikrant Sharma and Jigyasa Dixit

Café Arpan Exterior 2020

Photo by - Koumudi Chouhan, Aarti Nagarkar greeting at Café Arpan

Photo by - Brinston & Dylan, Tarang Music Group

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Yogesh Kulkarni
Executive Director at Vigyan Ashram

LinkedIn : Yogesh Kulkarni

Being Skilled at Learning with Yogesh Kulkarni

Yogesh Kulkarni is the Executive Director of Vigyan Ashram. He is an inspirational leader working at the grassroots with rural India to provide quality education and skill-based learning.

The philosophy of Vigyan Ashram revolves around "learning while doing" and the centuries-old Gurukul system. It is a unique learning model wherein students can learn from instructors beyond borders and practice at the institute under supervision. Late Dr. Srinath Kalbag established Vigyan Ashram,

and Yogesh has tirelessly worked on improving, scaling, and updating their model while preserving the unique essence of the institute.

Yogesh believes that rural areas are a goldmine of opportunities for creatives and problem solvers. If the rural problems are seen as opportunities, then great good can be accomplished. Finding problems has never been a difficulty at Vigyan Ashram as they are situated in a village and are closely connected to the people who face these problems. It has worked with

numerous rural enterprises and has many successful products that help entrepreneurs and many other users as well, such as the rice dehusking machine on which they worked for over 4 years and have sold hundreds of units. They believe in the power of innovation and advancement of technology coming not only from large corporations but from small rural entrepreneurs as well. With the COVID19 pandemic, Vigyan Ashram saw another opportunity to promote other avenues of learning and connecting with more people. Some of their courses have

been such a huge success that the thousands of women self-help group members take training from Vigyan Ashram during pandemic time. At Vigyan Ashram, mentors and mentees practise Vipassana, conduct discussion and debates on various topics, watch movies and play different games together to promote student-teacher bonding.

Yogesh stresses the importance of working by hand and the power of subjects like SUPW and other skill-based subjects in school in cognitive development. He says that the policies are in place, now it is our turn to change ourselves to learn better and innovate better.

-Written by Ujjwal Pandya and Suchira Biswas

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Deep Bajaj
Co-founder of Sirona Hygiene
& PeeBuddy

LinkedIn : Deep Bajaj

Innovation from Conversation

Deep is an entrepreneur and a Ted speaker, and for his work, an inspiration to many. With the aim of solving unaddressed intimate hygiene problems women face, Deep gave India her 1st Female Urination Device with PeeBuddy. Enabling them to stand & pee, the product has brought around a toilet hygiene revolution for women across the country. This is one among many other innovative products that Deep and his team have worked on to make better feminine health and hygiene practical and affordable.

"Unless we start talking about issues, there will not be any solutions," says Deep.

Starting to talk about these issues rather than sticking to conventions can help bring better solutions to the table. When it comes to menstrual hygiene, people think pads are the ultimate solution. However, by discussing it further, Deep discovered issues like girls being unable to swim or participate in sports during their period and how usual painkillers would make them feel drowsy. This helped Sirona provide solutions that catered to all

these unaddressed needs with products like pain relief patches, rash-free black pads, menstrual cups, and much more.

Deep wants his products to talk to everybody. To do this, he contacted an NGO that employs visually impaired people for the packaging. Targeting a diverse user segment of urban and rural kinds, Deep noticed a division in them based on whether or not they can afford these products. Deep's teamThey began several pay-it forward campaigns for those who can not afford these, educating women and girls

about menstrual hygiene and providing them these products. Deep told us that surprisingly rural women responded with acceptance since dealing with menstrual hygiene would be a common issue. On the other hand, many from the urban areas and middle classes were skeptical. The team would also contact ASHA, Aanganvadi, and sex workers and noticed that they were unhesitantly talking about these issues and readily accepted solutions Sirona offered.

Deep drew simple analogies to develop Peebuddy like paper cones for selling 'chana-jor-garam' and 'kuppi' the funnel to refill petrol in scooters. Deep wants his products to talk to everybody. To do this, he contacted an NGO that employs visually impaired people for the packaging. Targeting a diverse user segment of urban and rural kinds, Deep noticed a division in them based on whether or not they can afford these products. They began several pay-it forward campaigns for those who can not afford these, educating women and girls about menstrual hygiene and providing them these products.

The initiative has extended to making educational institutes' heads their social campaign ambassadors; these people propagate awareness at their respective campuses.

-Written by Anvesha Dubey & Suchira Biswas

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Neha Bagaria
Founder & CEO JobsForHer

LinkedIn : Neha Bagaria

Restart to Rise with Neha Bagaria

Rapidly changing circumstances require rapid discernment, adaptability, and an all-inclusive environment where an individual's needs are looked at from a humanitarian and holistic perspective. One such entrepreneurial initiative that has transformed the lives of many women and is continuing to uplift many more in these challenging times is JobsForHer. It helps women restart their careers after a break, with a motto of "Start, Restart, Rise." Founded by Neha Bagaria, a Wharton Graduate and an experienced professional in the finance

and marketing sector, she is a successful entrepreneur and a true inspiration.

Changing mindsets is a vital part of Neha's team at JobsForHer. We should take a hard look at what is being exposed to a woman since childhood. Priorities are set for them subconsciously since then, while boys dream about their perfect jobs and girls dream about their perfect wedding dresses, it ends up becoming their choice. The change needs to happen from a young age to remove gender biases.

Neha learned these four vital management skills only after becoming a mother.

Guilt Management: When working, don't feel guilty about not being with your family; when you're with your family, don't feel guilty about not being at work - is Neha's simple mantra.

Time Management: Making sure that multiple needs and priorities are taken care of with efficiency is done by having meticulous time management skills. Neha plans everything on the calendar, be it personal needs or social responsibilities.

Fear Management: While restarting, there is bound to be fear, self-doubt, and various what-if scenarios playing in your mind. As Sheryl Sandberg writes in her book 'Lean In', Neha believes fear is at the root of all things holding women from accelerating in their careers, and every woman needs to ask herself: "What Would You Do If You Were Not Afraid?"

Bias Management: It should be done at both home and workplace. Neha feels that people are adaptable for tackling their prejudices by making them aware of the roots of such biases. We need to be very assertive to make them realize and help them get over those. Correcting it kindly rather than letting it slide would be a better step.

-Written by Shreya Paliwal and Anvesha Dubey

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Hitesh Kenjale
Co-Founder of DesiHangover

LinkedIn : Hitesh kenjale

Microprocessor to Leather

Social entrepreneurship demands a lot of courage to explore the unexplored, what might act as a catalyst can be age. At the age of twenty when you act more and think less, the willingness to take risks and make undaunted explorations might be more. At twenty, Hitesh Kenjale saw potential in his Kolhapuri chappals, which established a name for themselves globally. He is the Co-Founder of DesiHangover with a demonstrated history of working in the social enterprise space. He is skilled in product development, supply chain, and business development.

Seeing how foreigners loved his Kolhapuri chappals drew his attention to the possibility of a conspicuous market for these chappals abroad. And that is how DesiHangover was born.

After getting a deeper dive into the life of artisans who hand-craft the footwear, the foundation of DesiHangover was laid. The artisans, although, had their own methods. Their technique of crafting footwear found its roots back in the time of their forefathers. They were oblivious to what happened outside their secluded village. An urban Indian might have

inclinations much different than those of an American or a Malaysian, for that matter. But the artisans would not be able to differentiate between them due to their lack of exposure to the outside world. To bridge the gap, Hitesh would present the footwear to the customers and come back with feedback and insights. These were worked upon to bring about necessary iterations in the design. That is how the design has co-evolved and after numerous modifications reached a point where it can be proudly sold at 120$ in the US and around 3000 rupees in India.

While talking about his decision on refusing lucrative college placements, and opting for trepreneurship instead, Hitesh says that with his background in engineering, as difficult as it was for him to go from microprocessor to leather, it was difficult to be his own boss. It is tough, but he is glad to have shared the experience with his co-founders and nurtured DesiHangover to where it is today.

-Written by Esha Mehta

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Sridhar Ranganathan
Founder & CEO of Shankar
Mahadevan Academy, Cloodon

LinkedIn : Sridhar Ranganathan

Creating for the Masses

"First thing you have to do is to believe in what you do; if you do that, then your work is half done. Otherwise, it gets boring," says Sridhar Ranganathan, Founder & CEO at Shankar Mahadevan Academy and SeekLMS, based out of Bangalore, Karnataka. He has also founded Blue Vector and Online Anywhere. Having worked for Xerox and Yahoo, Sridhar is a pioneer in the fields of accessing the internet on mobile devices and what is called EdTech today.

One of the most crucial learnings that Sridhar has received is treating people from all walks of life with integrity, respect and dignity. A business can go through its highs and lows, but in the long run, it is people who make things happen. On the same note, he believes in dealing with challenges with a good dose of positivity. Sridhar prefers to be concerned about only those issues where you have options or some measure of preference, not for those issues where you do not have a say.

Sridhar realized what he really loved doing was building something creative and constructive for the masses. This is when Yahoo! acquired Online Anywhere and appointed him as the General Manager of Yahoo! Everywhere. After returning to India, he established a Yahoo! software development unit here. His other startup – Blue Vector Inc, in 2006 was about sensor-based automation. Though it was not that successful at that time, we see its modern version today as FASTag.

Designing for the masses through observation of future needs of people is how Sridhar led his journey towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. He says, "You will make it through the water body if you jump in with the belief of swimming through to the other side. You have to try it out and even make some water if it is empty. But you will make it through".

-Written by Anvesha Dubey and Ujjwal Pandya

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Sonal Kapoor
Founder Director at Protsahan India
Foundation

LinkedIn : Sonal Kapoor

Through the Heart of Inclusivity

Sonal Kapoor is the founder of Protsahan India Foundation. She has worked in this sector for over a decade strengthening global child protection services; she has spread awareness to fight against child sexual abuse and social entrepreneurship.

After getting introduced to the world of politics, investments, and financial markets, she decided to pursue MBA in Marketing. She reached out to various organizations like UNICEF, HelpAge India, and others to work for their communication and advertising. After watching the desperate conditions that some people were living with and meeting underprivileged women during her job, she considered it her duty to help improve their quality of life.

Definitions have not meant much to Sonal. As a child, she never learned about entrepreneurship or how to practice it. The situations in her life have taught her how to be an entrepreneur. She says, "There are so many things to learn from so many people every day. The kind of things children at Protsahan have taught me, I do not think a board meeting can even try to understand or even teach what dignity, patience, resistance or resilience means".

Protsahan follows the Trauma-informed Compassionate care model of the classroom, which is friendly, keeping these children's history in mind. They have also introduced structures and models to provide psychosocial support to children like their HEART model, which stands for Healing, Education, Art, Recovery, and Technology. They use it as a tool to help bring children out of their shells and into a healthy learning environment. They also make sure that both teachers and counselors are compassionate and care-providing, as well as trauma-informed. They infuse various cartoons, music, and art like Warli, Madhubani, and more. Many fears start getting healed, and traumas begin getting expressed; these kids become cycle breakers of trauma.

They use the term intersectional. It helps with understanding how the social and political identities of an individual can cause discrimination. When they talk about free expression, she believes there are many aspects beyond these terms, and looking at things beyond the balance sheets and fancy pivot tables is where the real conversation will start.

Written by - Arnav Agarwal and Nikita Sharma
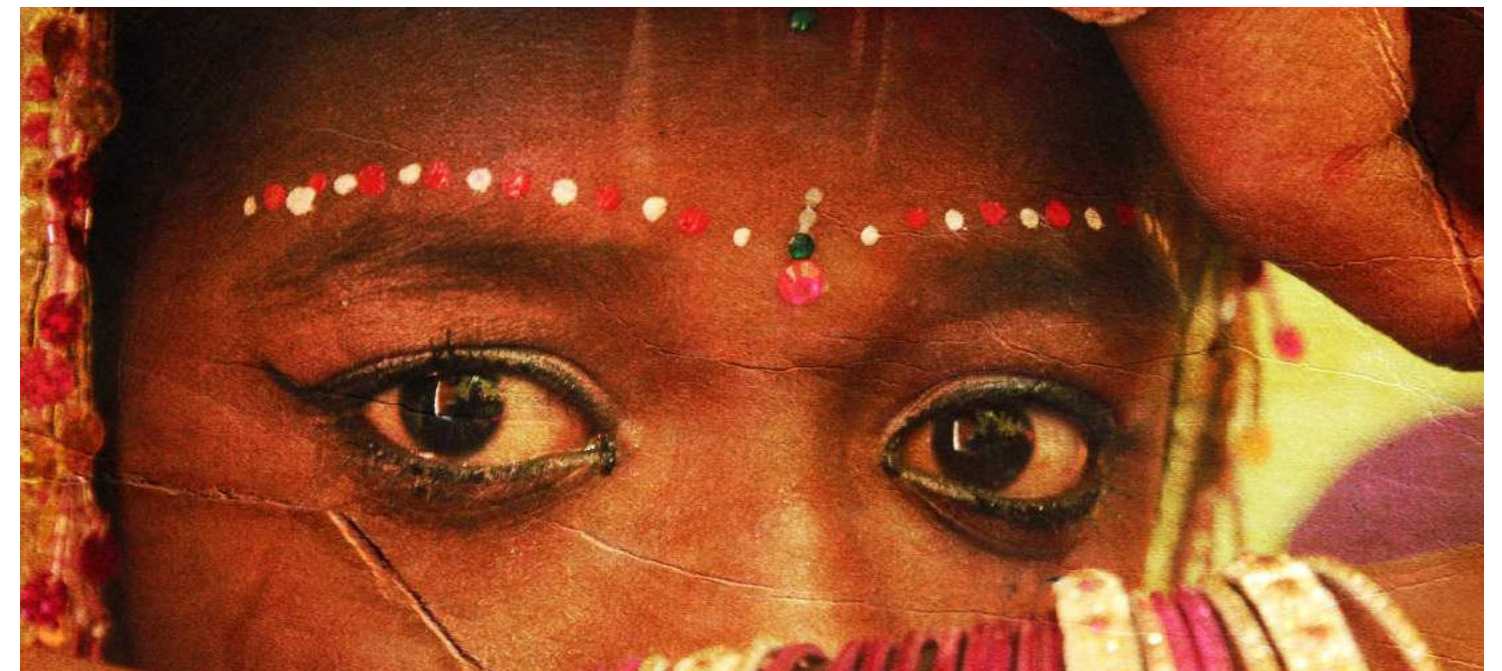
Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Aditi Gupta
Founder of Menstrupedia

LinkedIn : Aditi Gupta

Unpacking Taboos to Empower with Aditi Gupta

Aditi says that one of the most important things she has learnt in her journey is that although perseverance, skills and knowledge are vital, no one can overcome tenacity, especially when working with such challenging scenarios. The second key learning is conducting prototyping and iteration throughout the design process, launching newer versions of the product rather than sticking to the first one. The third one is to pivot around the problem, not the solution.

Interestingly Menstrupedia did not start as a business venture but rather as a small classroom program during their post-graduation, which matured into a complete research project funded by the Ford Foundation. Their first challenge was to overcome their inhibitions, biases and understand how shame around menstruation worked on people, leading to larger gender politics.

Aditi found that there was some taboo or discrimination around menstruation everywhere, regardless of communities or classes. Even in the most educated and privileged families, women sleep on just mats during their periods. Girls are taught from a young age to not speak about their periods and be ashamed of them. About 1.2 crore girls get their menstruation each year in India, and almost one-fourth of them start missing school, reducing their performance. Talking of LFPR (labour force participation rate), she found out India has lesser than 21% female participants, one of the lowest globally, the reason being heavy discrimination, bias and stigma women face.

Menstrupedia prides itself on being culturally sensitive and creating inclusive content. They always listen to their users, expanding with several translations. Menstrupedia collaborates with local health professionals while translating for that region.

Although targeted to girls, it is a book for everyone. Many people buy Menstrupedia's comics to teach their boys. In her masterclass, she has seen a large influx of male menstrual educators. One such instance was of a football coach; He was concerned about girls dropping out from sports after reaching puberty, so he wanted to become a menstrual educator to prevent that.

Aditi implores, " If you have a problem that is affecting you, try to address it. There has been no better time in the history of India or of your life; persevere and never give up."

-Written by Anvesha Dubey and Suchira Biswas
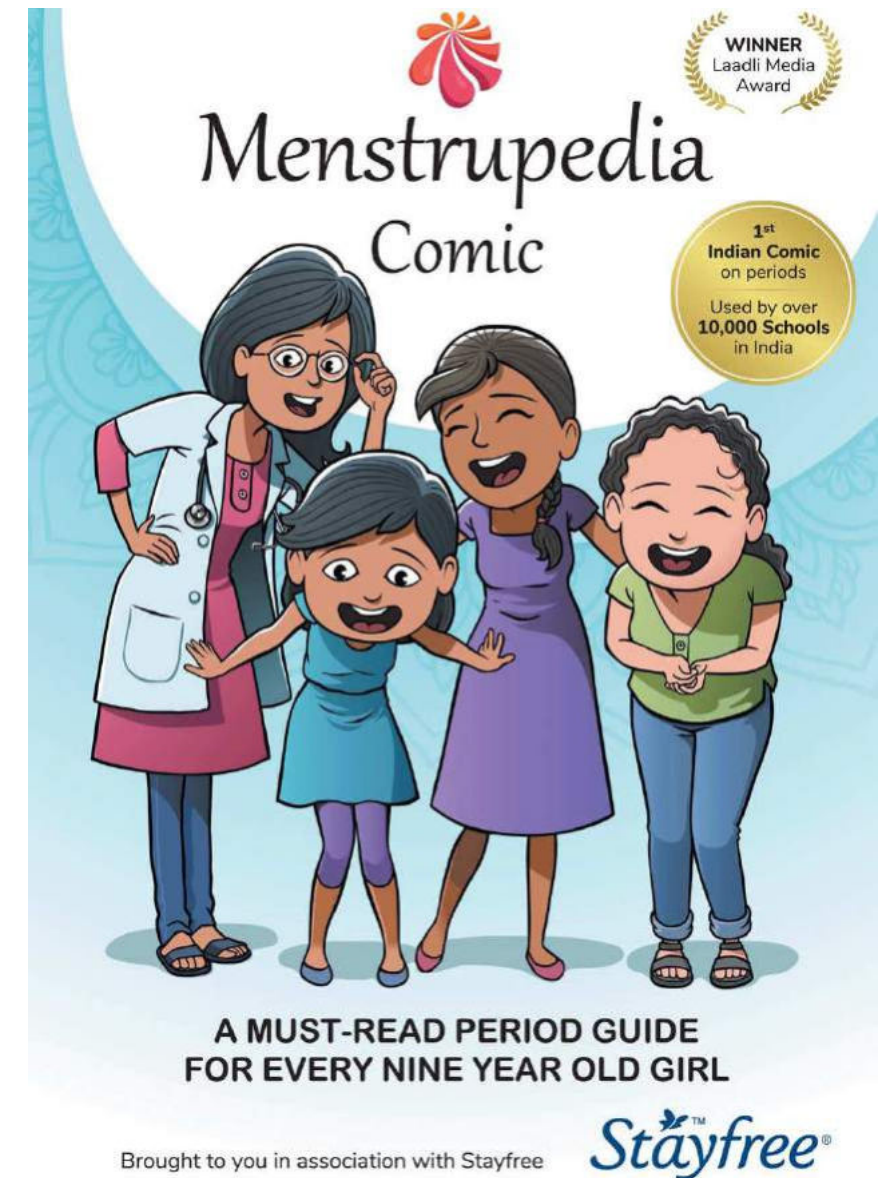
Click here to read the complete article on Medium

Anshu Bhartia
CEO at UnLtd India

LinkedIn : Anshu Bhartia

Learning from the Underprivileged

"Be the change you wish to see" is the motto that Anshu Bhartia, the Chief Executive Officer of UnLtd India follows. She believes that a society can only progress when citizens take responsibility to solve the problems they are impacted by.

During the first 17 years of her professional career, Anshu worked in the corporate sector. In December 2007, when she became a part of the Global Talent Management Pool, she was asked to reflect on her life goals; What emerged clearly was that poverty and vulnerability had bothered

her since she was a child and working in the development sector was the only way forward. Two years later, Anshu was able to break the golden handcuffs of ESOPs and corporate salaries, and in 2010, Anshu joined an NGO, Friends of WWB, India. Field visits supporting NGOs and MFis working across livelihoods, agriculture, solar and water sanitation; working intensively with Organization Founders learning on-ground realities; understanding nuances of running and managing an NGO with an 11 member Board were the game-changers. This was

Anshu's MBA in the social sector, a role which she is very thankful for and to the amazing team she worked with, which inspired her at every turn with their commitment, passion for the work and making a difference.

In 2017, she took the helm of UnLtd India as its CEO. The organization supports early-stage social entrepreneurs who can create high impact and grow as catalysts for social change. Over 13 years, UnLtd India has incubated 270 social entrepreneurs, among which 55% are not-for-profit, the balance 45% are for-profit

social enterprises. UnLtd India is sector-agnostic, supporting organizations working across Health, Education, Agriculture, Environment, Disabilities, etc.

For Anshu, respect for people is at the core and UnLtd India's culture is fully in alignment. That is the lens UnLtd India uses when meeting Social entrepreneurs across their selection process, reviewing, assessing and supporting new ideas and innovations thus providing an engaged and 'invested in' space for passionate entrepreneurs who want to solve a problem.

-Written by Jigyasa Dixit and Ujjwal Pandya

Click here to read the complete article on Medium

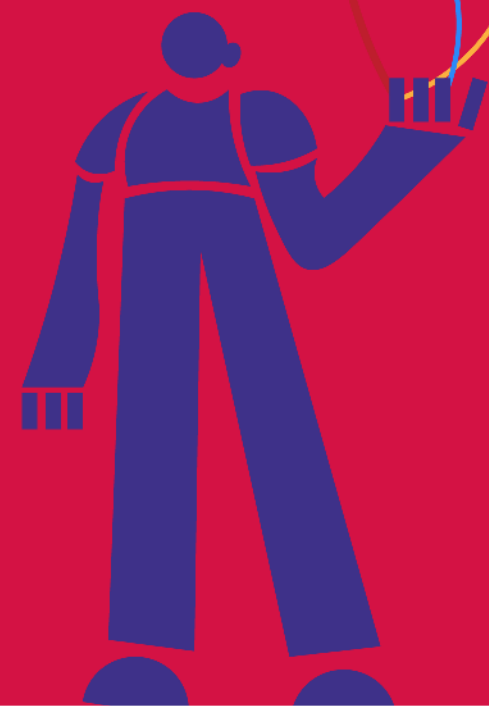# Providing Equal Learning Opportunities by Diminishing Language Barriers

Ninad Vengurlekar
CEO & Co-founder at Utter App

With over 18 years of experience in ed-tech and skill development sector, Ninad was one of the pioneers of mobile learning in India when IL&FS Education launched the world's first English learning course on feature phones in 2009. He has also headed verticals such as Retail Education, New Media, and Content Development.

LinkedIn: Ninad Vengurlekar

"What was the Sapiens' secret of success? How did we manage to settle so rapidly in so many distant and ecologically different habitats? How did we push all other human species into oblivion? Why could not even the strong, brainy, cold-proof Neanderthals survive our onslaught? The debate continues to rage. The most likely answer is the very thing that makes the debate possible: Homo sapiens conquered the world thanks above all to its unique language."
– Yuval Noah Harari in Sapiens

In India, there is a huge challenge for equitable dissemination of knowledge to the poor. Everything that we do has to be translated into multiple languages eventually. This approach leads to tremendous work, intellectual efforts, and costs for the designer or developer.

But this is not it. There are hundreds of millions in this country who cannot read and write traditional languages. They are not illiterate; they can speak a language but cannot decipher alphabets because of their lack of formal education. On the other hand, there are also people who migrate to other states and face challenges of interacting with that state's local language. An Odiya security guard, employed outside a bank branch in Bangalore, is unable to converse in Kannada with the bank's customers. There are hundreds of challenges like these that people in India face.

One way this challenge can be addressed is by creating, what I call Language-Independent Content. Language-Independent Content is a methodology where design is embedded with

the information tools required to decipher the message and the learnings. This is not a new approach, but it is rarely used in India to design and create learning products.

Learning is not restricted to schools and colleges. Learning opportunities present themselves at every nook and corner of the country, in every field, and across every economic stratum. For example, road signs are a learning opportunity. If you have to operate a smartphone, you have to decipher the icons.

> "Language-Independent Content is a methodology where design is embedded with the information tools required to decipher the message and the learnings."

What we have built are languages of letters and alphabets. These languages of letters are mutually exclusive and serve those who have access to learn them formally or informally. As a result, a country like India faces huge challenges of cultural assimilation. Linguistic divisions have led to violence and separation of States. Such is the power of language - which also happens to be its bane.

So how do you provide equal learning opportunities by diminishing language barriers? You cannot. Existing languages impede equality. You cannot diminish language barriers because the current design of languages is the barrier.

What we need to do is to create a new language. A language that comprises alphabets and icons that are visually easy to comprehend across cultures, age groups, and educational levels. Even an illiterate person should be able to connect with this new language. It should be taught in schools along with traditional languages. In the Internet age, reaching out to this language across the world will be a matter of minutes. The key is for designers to build the types, the fonts, and meaning into it. That would probably take a few years.

Providing equal learning opportunities would be just one of the benefits of a common language. What it would do is to help communicate and bond people across cultures and countries. The role of young design graduates is to develop such a common language by collaborating across geographies. I wish someone somewhere is able to take up this challenge.

As Carl Sagan said, "We invented phonetic writing so we could put our sounds down on paper and, by glancing at a page, hear someone speaking in our head—an invention that became so widespread in the last few thousand years that we hardly ever stop to consider how astonishing it is."

https://www.scie.ac.in/assets/img/Blog/Synopsis-blog.png

"We invented phonetic writing so we could put our sounds down on paper and, by glancing at a page, hear someone speaking in our head—an invention that became so widespread in the last few thousand years that we hardly ever stop to consider how astonishing it is."
- Carl Sagan

Mrinal Rai
Lead Designer at LinkedIn

With the ability to converge strategy, research, and data to design product that create value for people and business, Mrinal is a product design leader with strong analytical and articulation skills. He believes a great product is led by design, informed by data, and enabled by technology.

LinkedIn: Mrinal Rai

Inclusive Design is the Future We Should Strive For

Today, the diversity of a design team and its inclusive culture is how you can measure the maturity of the design process. An inclusive product must cater to people irrespective of race, gender, different ability, or any use case that has the potential to create an unintended consequence leading to inequality or discrimination.
For instance, during the pandemic, we all witnessed biases in the system that allowed certain types of professionals to grow (e.g., those in the tech industry) while many traditional industry workers, especially in lower SEC strata, became unemployed. Is there an opportunity for your product to bridge the gap created by the pandemic? Such questions are important because they predict how your company and product will grow in the future and how prepared you are to respond to any unforeseen situation.

A diverse and inclusive team builds a diverse and inclusive product

Almost all the design processes you may come across in different organizations follow similar methodologies. However, not all the products you come across have the same degree of inclusivity or are equally accessible, not because there is a dearth of good designers but because of the product priorities based on the organization's core values. The flip side of the debate is about the possibility of building a product or feature that is inclusive and accessible and still leads to quantifiable business results. I firmly believe that it is possible.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. (DIBs) is an integral part of LinkedIn's core value. There are courses on DIBs on LinkedIn Learning, which show how diversity, inclusion, and belonging form the foundation for an equitable workplace. It can be developing tools and strategies for managers to imbibe these values, hire diverse talent, and actions for executives to propagate this culture.

Ask what is relevant to avoid any unintended consequence

DIB's is not just reflected in LinkedIn's culture but also in the products we build. For instance, if you are new to LinkedIn and want to create your account, you don't need to provide your gender details unless you would like to self identify on the platform.

> "Diversity in the workplace is not just the social and moral responsibility of any organization but also has some significant business benefits."

While it may sound obvious, it has a much profound implication. We, as humans, are prone to unconscious biases. Diversity in the workplace is not just the social and moral responsibility of any organization but also has some significant business benefits. According to a McKinsey report, ethnically diverse companies are [35% more likely to yield higher revenue,](#) while gender-diverse companies are [15% more likely to generate higher revenue.](#) At LinkedIn, our persistent endeavour is to build products that propagate and support diversity, inclusion, and belongingness.

Inclusive design is a change agent

While not asking for gender is an essential consideration against unconscious bias, the option to add your pronoun on your LinkedIn profile is a crucial step towards an inclusive product. Sharing pronouns may not be important info for a cisgender person (a person whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth); it's a pivotal choice that could make or break a nonbinary or transgender person's opportunity at hand.

Imagine you are applying for a job or joining a new workplace, and you have to talk about your gender or the pronoun you should be addressed as – not a comfortable thing to discuss on the first day of your work. It works best that a cisgender person leads the change. Normalization of the process works best, and it creates a sense of belonging and openness for a non-cisgender person. At LinkedIn, we recommend people to add pronouns – this helps candidates who could be transgender and may be applying for a job to feel safe and welcome even before joining.

An equitable and inclusive product is an outcome of an inclusive and diverse design thinking process directly proportional to how diverse is your design team and how inclusive your organization is. Often, we ignore some of the important considerations for inclusive design as an edge case. Still, an unintended consequence of a design is never an edge case if you truly want to create an inclusive product.

One of the most challenging things in

design is to achieve simplicity. Addressing a complex problem with a simple design solution is a thing all great designers try to strive for it. If a product makes you sensitive to behave and think about others who need your support, it's a job well done.

"An equitable and inclusive product is an outcome of an inclusive and diverse design thinking process directly proportional to how diverse is your design team and how inclusive your organization is."

Interweaving the Experiences of a Multidisciplinary Journey

Shayak Sen
Head of Design at Vedantu

Shayak is a design executive with experience in building and leading design teams. He brings in a unique combination of corporate and entrepreneurial experience with multidisciplinary expertise in the product innovation process.

LinkedIn: Shayak Sen

Can you tell us about your journey discovering design and then navigating the corporate world, having previously worked at places like Practo, Meesho and now at Vedantu?

My journey of working in various ventures has given me an enriching experience. I started my design career as a graphic designer at an advertising agency, after which I pursued higher education. By the time I completed my master's, the world was transforming swiftly. With the advent of the iPhone, it was clear that the landscape of user experience design was changing. I then started a company called CheeseCare with my batchmates in Bangalore. Two and a half years later, we had a dozen designers and a couple of frontend engineers in the team. We then got acquired by a software development company. Post the acquisition, I joined **frog**. Frog is one of the world's leading design agencies and I joined as the first employee in its India office. My journey with **frog** was fascinating. It gave me many insights into the inner workings of large design agencies and multinational clients.

After frog I wanted to work on a product to go deeper into solutioning based on data and user insights. So, I joined Commonfloor, to head their design team. I had a great experience building the team at Commonfloor and leading some big design charters.

In 2016, I was diagnosed with cancer. I underwent treatment for about a year, and that time was quite difficult. However, it was also the one with many revelations and self-realizations. I remember during this time I went to a hospital where I was blown away by the customer experience. I felt so comfortable with their way of dealing with my fears and anxiety that I was convinced I wanted to be treated there.

Later, to get a second opinion, we went to a famous cancer hospital which was renowned in terms of healthcare quality and practices. However the experience was challenging as it catered to millions of people across the country. It was crowded, difficult to navigate and you had to wait in queues for hours. To me the experience was quite harrowing. Being a User experience designer, my priorities while choosing between the two hospitals was the experience. Hence I preferred the first one over the second.

> "In certain areas the experience is not just about a good feeling. There are other priorities in life, and as designers we need to evaluate that."

My father made me realise that when it comes to healthcare, experience is not a priority. The quality of medical practice and doctors are. It was one of many key learnings for me, that in certain areas the experience is not just about a good feeling. There are other priorities in life, and as designers we need to evaluate that.

So when I was cured, I decided to go into healthcare, and joined Practo. I led the design team at Practo for about two and a half years. My experience in Practo taught me that healthcare is not just about health but about many other aspects like family, finance, and career. So sensitivity towards design has to improve in every dimension. It is something every designer needs to do to evolve.

After Practo, I made it a point to myself to do something that contributes to products that have real impact on people. In an attempt to carry this forward I joined Meesho. Meesho helps women entrepreneurs from Tier 2 and 3 cities to successfully run their businesses and be independent and self reliant. I was amazed at the work these women

did to support their families and the kind of transformations they have in their lives through this. That was when the founders at Vedantu reached out to me. They were working to change the dynamics of education in India, which intrigued me a lot. I joined Vedantu and that has been my journey till now.

While designing for a brand catering to a diverse audience that mainly consists of children, how do you ensure that the needs of all the groups are included?

This is something we internally call category nuance. We have three distinct groups whose needs differ in wide ranges. The groups are divided into grades one to five, six

to eight, and nine to twelve. Grades one to five require a completely different user experience. In this group, it is the parents who decide what their kids will be learning. The learning experience for the kids is more gamified. We have to focus on various details. For instance, we can take the buttons. For the kid's section we keep the corner radius around 8, which makes it look more playful and game-like. Whereas for the senior groups, we keep it 4 pixels as it needs to be more matured and less playful. These are the kinds of details we have to work on to make sure the design language is right for the respective target group. We have separate teams for each of these areas. Their entire design environment is different, starting from the design systems to the UX

principles they follow.

How has having multidisciplinary design experience helped you in building experiences at Vedantu?

Back in the day, I never thought that I would make a career in design. In my school days, I was primarily interested in physics, which teaches us to have a theory behind everything. Then I got into Architecture in IIT Roorkee, where you get a sense of space and learned to look at things from a different perspective, which is the second part of my multidisciplinary career. The third was when I did my master's in visual communication. This is where typography, visuals, and general execution of vision comes into the picture.

Lastly, understanding business by being a part of the industry is another important factor. And I believe the essence of all these four aspects has culminated and developed my thought process while working on each project.

In your opinion, what is the most challenging aspect of working in a diverse environment?

How can it add to better design?

Going out and starting a new venture towards solving real-world problems in the digital world is very complicated.

The first challenge is the varying points of view inside the organization. At Vedantu, our leaders are open about different opinions, but a lot of hard work goes into bringing the required focus and alignment. For example, when you go to a school or a coaching institute in the offline world, there exists a certain method of teaching. You get enrolled into a particular class based on your age and then are seated in different batches or sections, and the same teachers teach you the same subjects throughout the course. There, you do not have much choice. The big question arises about whether we want to continue with the same model for online education as well? In the online world, choice is a big dimension. How can we bring it to our users? For instance, if a student wants to change their teacher after completing two months in the course, will they get the choice to do so?

This requires very evolved operational workflows and necessary investment in terms of resources and capital. These are the challenges that we in the organization usually have diverse opinions about, and the fundamental principles of education have to be kept in mind to move forward.

Is it essential for young designers to get exposure to different design disciplines? Can it help propel us into an era of design equity?

Design at its core is a craft-based field. So I believe that a student or a designer should mainly focus on their craft in the initial years of his career. They should have the ability to understand various design processes, UX patterns and be hands-on with their visual design. Mastering this requires a lot of practice. I strongly believe that designers evolve with age and experience and get better. So it is vital to have the knowledge, experience, and exposure to different disciplines. Having experience in a diverse background will put your design into a much richer perspective.

Equity is also about being accessible. Is Vedantu trying to design something that can aid kids with disabilities? How is it trying to cater to economically challenged students?

Currently, we are not actively working on something that can aid kids with disabilities. We are first focused to make this work for the general students. Coming to financial accessibility, there are many strategies in play to become so to students with weak financial backgrounds.

The fundamental philosophy that Vedantu works around is "Impact at scale." Our founder's vision is that every student, regardless of where they reside, should have complete access to our classes. For this, we first created on-demand offerings because there are certain costs associated with running a typical course. We are also trying to avail different technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence to help us aid the cause.

-Written by Jigyasa Dixit

"Design at its core is a craft-based field. So I believe that a student or a designer should mainly focus on their craft in the initial years of his career."
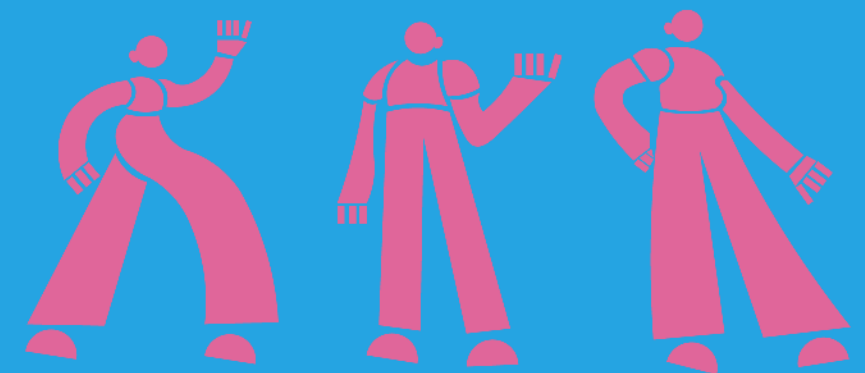
Bridging the gap between industry and academia

Sessions conducted in March - May 2021

March

i-Connect
Weekly interactive sessions with industry leaders to build skills & listen to their experiences.

ADS Podcast
India's first Designeering Podcast show showcasing Global leaders sharing their journey and opinions.

Kedar Nimkar
Jupiter

Geet Bhatt
Frizzon Production

Azmina Poddar
BCG (Boston Consulting Group)

Trupti Shirodkar
Copilot

Navneet Nair
PhonePe

Tim Kobe
Eight Inc.

Dr. Anbu Rathinavel
Intellect Design Arena

Shanoo Bhatia
EUMO

Rahber Nazir
Kaamastra

Abhay Vyas
Salesforce

Debayan Mukherjee
Samsung Electronics

Anuj Kapur
PolicyBazaar

Joan Picanyol
Mucho Design

Rohit Koul
KPMG

Sandeep Karmakar
Nutanix

Sebastian Gier
BMW

Abhimanyu Kulkarni
Philips

Prasanna BK
Tata Elxsi

Somdutt Sarkar
Procter & Gamble

Vishal Sharma
Capgemini

Manav Dhiman
Brewhouse

Anish Velayudhan Kutty
Indegene

Priyank Sharma
MX TakaTak

May

A Diverse Team is a Catalyst for Impactful Innovation

Katrin Abwerzger

Experience Design at
PropertyGuru Group

Katrin is a design manager and practitioner with 15 years of experience in UX, Product and Service Design. She creates, delivers and shapes products and services for user impact and business results. Her experience spans from working in tech companies, global corporations and for multinational clients across real-estate, telco, finance, hospitality, and entertainment industries — marketplace, B2C, and B2B products as well as service design and customer experience projects. Katrin has built and led several cross-functional international teams and projects.

LinkedIn: Katrin Abwerzger

How has your experience being a UX and interaction designer, for more than a decade, helped you see the world differently?

I have been doing it my whole career, so I would not know how my world perspective could have been different if I would have been an engineer. Nevertheless, a learning that I am implementing from my work in my life is empathy. It is one of the most important skills or mindsets that a designer should have. I approach both my work relationships and personal relationships by showing empathy, and trying to understand where the other person is coming from and why they are sometimes acting in a particular way.

As a UX Designer, you have to constantly advocate for users' needs, and empathy is a key component. Why don't we go ahead and extend that very same ability to the way we build our teams, structure our processes, and build relationships with the design community?

Whenever designers in my team come to me and tell me they have a problem with their project manager because he/she is not sharing information with them, the first question I ask them is whether they understand what is on the project manager's plate? Maybe they are super busy hence could not communicate.

As a designer, one needs to understand where their stakeholders come from. It is good to understand the business goals that they want to achieve as a team. Otherwise, you can be the best designer globally, but you would not understand the outcome that you want to achieve through your design and hence would never get a great product out.

Could you share the Property Guru culture and how you implement it in your workforce?

Culture is very much built around our people.
One of the principles that we have at Property Guru is, always people first.
At our quarterly team meetings with our CEOs and CXOs, where we talk about the business updates, the first thing to share is updates about the people, and what we are doing to make people's life easier, and to simplify their workflows within the company.

> "No deadline is as important as your personal life. I trust my team that they will deliver the best work whether they are working from nine to six in the office or not."

> **"It is good to understand the business goals that they want to achieve as a team. Otherwise, you can be the best designer globally, but you would not understand the outcome that you want to achieve through your design and hence would never get a great product out."**

During the COVID lockdown in Singapore, we found that people were stressed out, and hence we decided to give some extra holidays across the whole company. So listening to the feedback that people give and implementing it is essential.

No deadline is as important as your personal life. I trust my team that they will deliver the best work whether they are working from nine to six in the office or not. One can work from anywhere as long as the work is delivered. Nobody needs to justify why they are taking

a day off. It is basically about putting people first, acknowledging that life happens and life gets in the way, and life is more important than your job. That is one of the primary cultures in my team.

Where do you see bias showing through in the design community and modern design ideology?

When I first came to Singapore from Europe 10 years back, where the industry is way advanced and knowing how important UX is, I was taken aback, seeing people did not know about it. Hence it is amazing to see how it has grown and advanced now. For example, UX conferences are coming up in the Philippines and Indonesia, where massive UX teams are being built in the big companies with hundreds of designers. However, is it great, and does everybody have access? Not yet. I think there is still a long way to go.

In my team, we are recruiting people with experience in the respective markets we are working for. It is important that you do not get at all Europeans or Americans to figure out the Thailand

property market because honestly they might have never bought or rented a home in Thailand. It is also good to get people with different cultures to get multiple perspectives.

At Property guru, we have about 30 different nationalities. So there is not even a question about diversity. When it comes to hiring, I do not look so much at education or universities. I think experience is way more important. For our senior designers, their portfolio is significant. It is essential for junior designers to look at how they can articulate problems and solutions and what their thought process is. We also have some people in our team that switched careers.

So yes, I think that to have diversity and different perspectives in the team is important. Having

> **"You always have to come in with the right mindset, show empathy to your stakeholders, and learn what they are talking about."**

diversity in the team guards you from certain biases as well.

In what factors does the lack of diversity in the design team affect the end product?

If you take our system of working for instance, we have subject matter experts and researchers coming in at the beginning of the project. They help to figure out the actual user needs and problems. Then we have UI designers coming in towards the end of the project to ensure that the product adheres to our design system and makes sure that it is aligned to the brand perspectives. We also have a peer checks session, which is for everybody to give feedback on product design at certain stages, which helps get different perspectives.

We must have a set of different people working on the product over time. We always have a product designer responsible for the overall product experience, but we acknowledge that they are not unicorn at doing everything.

What do you think are the biggest barriers to achieving equity in the design industry?

If designers present themselves as creative people that make things look nice, then yes, nobody will ever take them seriously.

You might still produce nice designs, but that does not really help you to have a discussion with your CFO. It is more about understanding the business and talking the language of your stakeholders because we always build a product for a certain outcome. There is always a user outcome when your goal is to achieve to make the lives of our users better. But if you do not speak the language of your business, if you do not understand what your CEO is talking about, if you do not understand what your sales team or your marketing team is talking about, then you would not get the desired outcome. You always have to come in with the right mindset, show empathy to your stakeholders, and learn what they are talking about.

Which sector do you think urgently needs equity in design and why?

All sectors that do not work very well. Let us start with the government. That is a huge sector that needs equity in design. Singapore is a good example here when it comes to streamlining processes. Another sector is insurance. I think insurance tech in the US is really interesting where you have an app for personal insurance, and with a few clicks, you can claim, get your money back, and easily get insured. Any industry that does not focus on the end-user needs to have equity in design.

– Written by Samiksha Banka

> **"It is more about understanding the business and talking the language of your stakeholders because we always build a product for a certain outcome."**

Shami Goregaoker
Design Director at GA design

Shami's core competence includes interior design for luxury residences and clubhouses. She is an alumnus of JJ School of Arts, Nirmala Niketan Polytechnic, ISCD Sydney, and University of Arts, London. She is a certified colour consultant and is equipped with extensive knowledge of interior styling as well as colour and lighting concepts. She combines this knowledge with a keen eye for the latest design.

LinkedIn: Shami Goregaoker
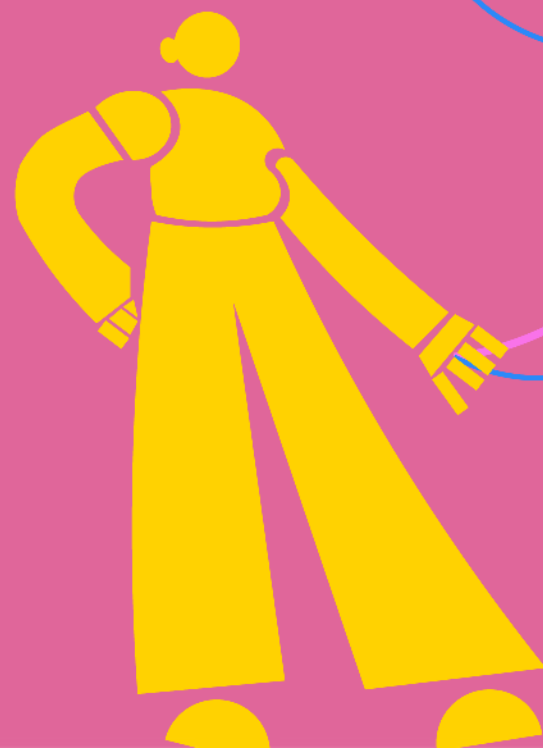
Removing the Conventional Colour Biases while Designing Products

Colour is the most apparent visual element of any object, be it live, animate, or inanimate, followed by size and then proportion to its immediate surroundings. As human beings, we are the more fortunate species as we can see color in RGB mode, whereas most animals and other species see a muted form of color.

There are some interesting facts about color that could help us in our day to day lives:

1. Colour affects our depth perception
When choosing colors for a room, you should consider this. Bright, cool colors generally make a room feel bigger, and dark warm colors generally make a room feel smaller and more intimate.

2. Wearing bright colors could be the one thing between you and that job you wanted
Wearing bright colors stands out more than greyed-off colors. Bright colors can improve your mood and the moods of others around you which could affect the outcome of that important meeting, or make an impact so a client remembers you when deciding whom they choose to work with.

3. Pink is the color used for anger management
When feeling angry, it has been said that visualizing the color pink can reduce the anger you are feeling. The color pink promotes calmness and peace.

4. Red and yellow promote hunger
Red makes you feel warm, comforted, and loved, which is what some would describe as a good meal should make us feel. Yellow, as well as being the 'happy' color, has been found to encourage hunger. When used with red, your brain releases more serotonin, a feel-good hormone, when you see the color. Notice how many restaurants use yellow in their logos to make you want to stop and eat.

5. Men and women see color differently
Men and women do not see eye to eye, the study says. Men's eyes see colors such as red, women's eyes will see the different shades/tones of that color, such as Maraschino and Cayenne.

Traditionally certain colors are symbolic across cultures. For instance White for purity, red for
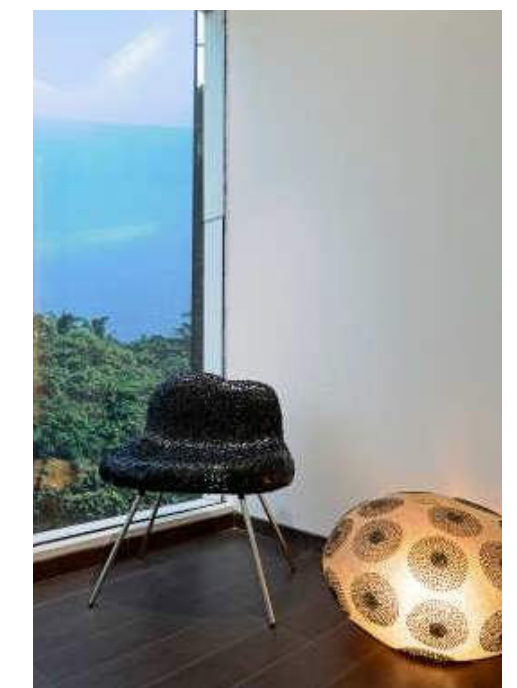
designer will be happy to use black to make a bold statement. Whether it is in fashion, interiors, communication, or products.

If you want your design to look distinguished or feisty, black is the way to go. In addition, metallics are a sure shot way to seek attention and make your design or product look remarkable.

Once you are able to free your mind of conventional color biases and de-link color from symbolism, you can realize the

magic you can create by experimenting with different colors.

"Once you are able to free your mind of conventional color biases and de-link color from symbolism, you can realize the magic you can create by experimenting with different colors."

celebration, and black for mourning. As the science of color suggests, brighter colors bring more cheer and are more likely to attract eyeballs than darker colors.

Talking about black, it is the most challenging color to be used in design. Black has been conventionally associated with all things bad, dark, evil, and unholy. As an interior designer, I have faced resistance from most clients whenever I have suggested using the color black. There have been instances when the very first brief and sometimes the only brief I have received is to avoid the color black.

Many items in our daily lives are black as they do not come in a different color, and we live with it just fine. Our televisions, home theatre amplifiers, and speakers, electronic kitchen equipment, computer keyboards, mouse, wires, spectacle cases, footwear for men, women, and children, stationery, mobile phones, chargers; the list is endless. It is also strange that people who believe black is a "bad color," do not bat an eyelid before purchasing a large black TV that sits on their wall forever!

On the other hand, in the design world, black is sometimes associated with style and luxury. Any
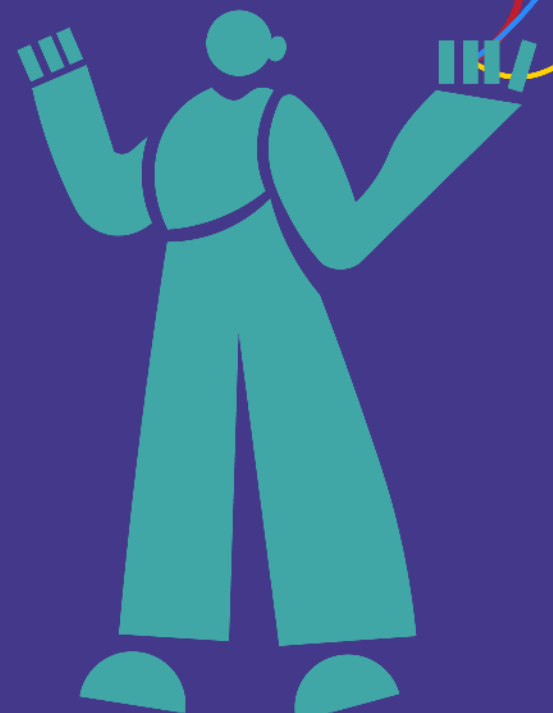
Gandhian Lens to Inclusive Innovation

Vishal Sharma

Senior Director at Capgemini

Vishal believes firmly in iterative development as a way to build on new innovative ideas and put them in front of the customers/users quickly. He believes that innovation is the key to success, especially in the digital landscape. Innovation drives digital disruptions both in business models as well as technology to drive revenue growth and uncover new markets for the businesses.

LinkedIn: Vishal Sharma

In developing countries, innovation and innovation systems have conventionally been associated with large formal organizations, often addressing export markets or producing goods (rarely services) for higher-income local consumers. The innovations produced have been associated with inequality and have little connection or relevance to the population's low-income majority.
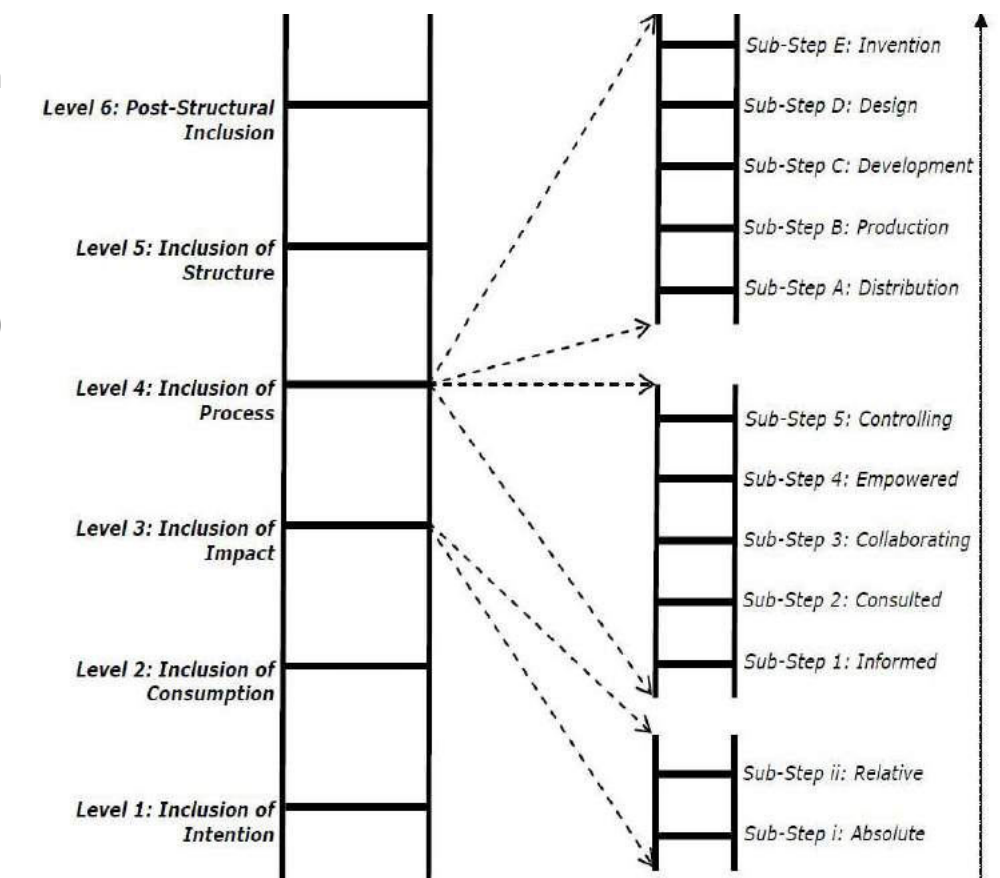
At root, inclusive innovation takes a different view of development from conventional views of innovation (IDRC 2011): "Conventional views of innovation (often implicitly) understand development as generalized economic growth. By contrast, inclusive innovation explicitly conceives development in terms of active inclusion of those who are excluded from the mainstream of development."

It seems most helpful to understand the different views as a ladder of inclusive innovation, with each succeeding step representing a greater notion of inclusivity concerning innovation.

• Level 1 Intention: an innovation is inclusive if, as a result, it intends to address the excluded group's needs, wants, or problems.

• Level 2 Consumption: an innovation is inclusive if it is adopted and used by the excluded group. This requires that innovation be developed into concrete goods or services.

• Level 3 Impact: an innovation is inclusive if it has a positive impact on the excluded group's livelihoods.

Level 6: Post-Structural Inclusion
Level 5: Inclusion of Structure
Level 4: Inclusion of Process
Level 3: Inclusion of Impact
Level 2: Inclusion of Consumption
Level 1: Inclusion of Intention

Sub-Step E: Invention
Sub-Step D: Design
Sub-Step C: Development
Sub-Step B: Production
Sub-Step A: Distribution

Sub-Step 5: Controlling
Sub-Step 4: Empowered
Sub-Step 3: Collaborating
Sub-Step 2: Consulted
Sub-Step 1: Informed

Sub-Step ii: Relative
Sub-Step i: Absolute

- **Level 4 Process:** an innovation is inclusive if the excluded group is involved in the development of the innovation.

- **Level 5 Structure:** an innovation is inclusive if it is created within a structure that is itself inclusive. Deep inclusion requires that the underlying institutions, organizations, and relations that make up an innovation system are inclusive.

- **Level 6 Post-Structure:** an innovation is inclusive if created within a frame of knowledge and discourse that is itself inclusive.

Mahatma Gandhi's two important tenets: "I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all," and "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed." The first tenet referred to affordability, and the second tenet referred to sustainability. These are critical for inclusive innovation.

As Dr. Mashelkar famously called out, and I quote, "The Industrial enterprises strive for getting more from less for more." Which meant, getting more (performance) from less (resource) for more (profit). But Gandhian Engineering has a different message. It means getting more (performance) from less (resource) for more (people), not just for more (profit). Remember Gandhi had said, "Benefit of all, not for just a few but for more people."

The term Gandhian Engineering, coined by Dr. Mashelkar, relates to the core of what inclusive innovation is all about. India has been at the forefront of Inclusive Innovation, citing few examples here:

MORE FOR LESS FOR MORE – Nano is Transformational Innovation - Ratan Tata

When Ratan Tata saw a family of four on a scooter, he said I have to change this, and Nano was born. Ratan set the mark for the cost at $2000 or 1L INR car to include as many people as possible.

Model	Year	HP	Price
Model T	1908	20	$19,700
Beetle	1956	24	$11,333
Mini	1961	34	$11,777
Tata Motors	2008	33	$2,500

Technology was updated, the process was refined, new designelements were added to ensure we can have 'More for Less for More.'

As Dr. Mashelkar said in a speech on Nano "Very soon, your chauffeur will drive to your house in a Nano. You will need to make space in your driveway for your chauffeur's car, but more importantly, you will need to make space in your minds for this transformation."

MORE FOR LESS FOR MORE – Changing the paradigm - Jaipur foot – Pandit Ram Chandra Sharma – a master craftsman

An artificial foot in the US can cost you anywhere between $12,000 to $18,000. Now we have 4 billion people with income less than $2 a day. It will take them 15 years to buy one artificial foot! Then the difference in performance expectations.

An Indian foot cannot only be as good as an American foot. It has to be ten times better in terms of performance. The simple reason is this, An Indian walks barefoot an American does not. An Indian stands in the paddy field the whole day. The American does not. An Indian climbs a tree but jumps down one.

Now the challenge here is to make $12,000 foot affordable at $30 and make it ten times better in terms of performance. This is changing the paradigm.

Pandit Ram Chandra Sharma, aka "Masterji" was invited in the 1960s by Dr. Sethi to teach art as therapy to polio victims at the SMS Hospital. He watched amputees being fitted with impractical, expensive, imported artificial limbs. Masterji created a foot made of vulcanized rubber hinged to a wooden limb, and the Jaipur foot was born.

The Jaipur Foot is superior to its SACH (Solid Ankle Cushion Heel) counterpart in certain ways, mainly in the range of movements it offers.

"It seems most helpful to understand the different views as a ladder of inclusive innovation, with each succeeding step representing a greater notion of inclusivity concerning innovation."

From 1975 to 31.03.2016

Years	Limbs	Calipers	Others (crutches,sticks,splints, braces, etc)	Tricycles/wheel chairs	Hearing aids	Surgery	Total
Total	513,806	409,944	462,867	105,774	34,921	7,472	1,534,784

Rethinking UX

RethinkingUX stands by one of its core values i.e. 'A Community-Driven Initiative,' a step towards giving back to the community. We are driven by 20000+ followers across all social media with different roles and backgrounds who believe in sharing their knowledge and inspiring the coming generation of product evangelists. Behind the scenes, it is run by eight core team members who are fueled by the mission to connect pragmatic learning to career aspirations by bringing like-minded people together.

Noteworthy Events

Connect the Dots and **Full Circle**: Through these programs, we invite dynamic personalities from the industry to share their experience and perspectives on diverse topics ranging from entrepreneurship, leadership, UX, product, psychology, and others from the renowned leaders. In 2020, we delivered 14 exclusive talks.

Link to see all past events: https://rethinkingux.com/events
Link to access the event recordings:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/C/videos

Coffee Convo: A bi-weekly event where we meet and interact with some special people for a casual conversation over coffee (or Tea) to share their learnings and knowledge on a variety of topics. So far the community has gathered for 90+ times coffee convos.

Key Initiatives

1. Gurukul –

Our Mentorship Program: Gurukul is all about creating an environment where people have the opportunity to expand their skills and are rewarded for doing so. We are constantly improving our mentorship offering by collecting feedback from our mentors and mentees.

Our list of mentors from Gurukul event:
 https://rethinkingux.com/gurukul
Our first Mentorship Mega event:
https://tinyurl.com/hp5tf728

2. Train the Trainer –

Masterclass Series: In 2021, we launched a new three-week learning series to enable community members to build muscle for the most demanded skills in the industry. So far we have delivered successfully two classes on usability testing and Figma.

3. Podcast –

Rethinking UX podcast has been formed to ignite curiosity by discussing a variety of topics from product development and UX. Each episode tries to bring forward people from all walks of the 'product life' and aims to bring clarity in ambiguity .

4. Tell us your story –

This is our way to learn more about the members of our community. As a part of these initiatives, we highlight and publicize their stories on our social media channels.
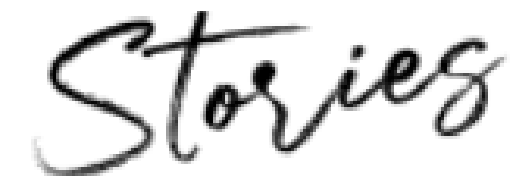
5. Let's pick some brains –

A weekly Q&A series to foster a healthy discussion among our slack community members.

Follow us on our social media channels to get the latest updates
Website | Linkedin | Instagram | Youtube | Facebook
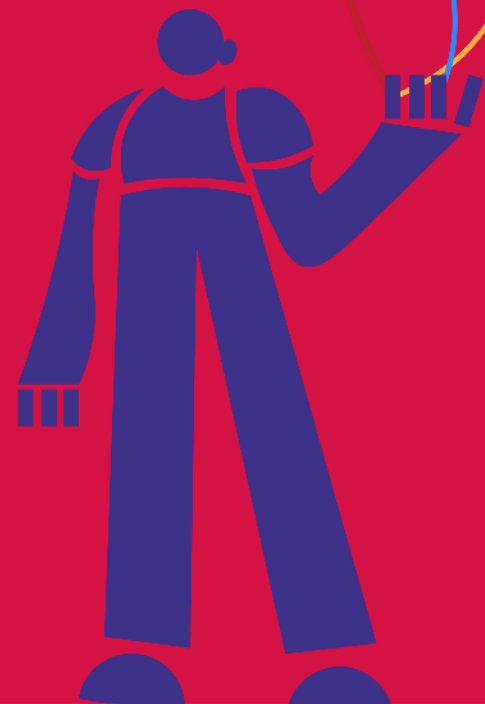
Taking Subjectivity out of Design

Varun Dhawan

Head of Design at Innovaccer

Varun is a Product Designer with an appetite for solving problems with design and technology. Currently, as the head of design at Innovaccer, he and his team are reimagining healthcare.

LinkedIn: Varun Dhawan

Five years into healthcare, I am sure there are more similarities between practicing medicine and design than I thought. To begin with, both are about diagnosing and treating problems.

When we describe our symptoms to a doctor, they ask questions to gather more information about us and what is going on inside our body. They use blood tests or scans to devise a well-informed treatment plan. Depending on how the patient responds to treatment, they change the course. Wait, don't we call that Design Thinking?

The subjectivity in design

Designers often find themselves solving the "symptoms of the problem," rather than the real problem.

When we launched our first product, our users kept complaining that the product was too white. We had no clue what was wrong. It looked great on our screen. We tested it on every display we could find around the office. So we started tweaking our colors and even changed our font, only to realize that things did not improve. Imagine the doctor treating high fever and pain while the real problem could be dengue or worse.

As Einstein is quoted saying, "If I had only one hour to save the world, I would spend fifty-five minutes defining the problem, and only five minutes finding the solution." The first step to design is understanding the problem.

We have all struggled with the subjectivity of design; people make design decisions based on what they feel vs the facts. Data can help us bring objectivity to the process and make informed design decisions.

Data can be quantitative and qualitative

A lot of times, data gets confused with numbers, page views, bounce rates, and average times. While numbers can give insights into the situation, the fundamental goal of data is to understand the reason behind those numbers. User demographics, the devices they use, or their working environment are equally important data points to inform the design decisions we make every day.

An inclusive design process

Anyone who is figuring out how to solve your user's problem is a designer; product managers, engineers, and designers alike. It is only fair that they are well-informed while making design decisions.

At Innovaccer, we conduct various sessions with our users, on problem discovery, feedback deep-

dives, and usability testing. These sessions include UX researchers, designers, product managers, and often folks from engineering.

When we interviewed a user to understand why they thought our product looked white, an engineer on the call realized that Windows renders colors differently than a Mac. The shades of gray we were using appeared white and cold on their machines, reducing the overall contrast.

There is immense power in learning about the users.

Pandemic has changed the way these sessions work, for the better in many ways. Since they happen virtually, all stakeholders can join and listen in.

But I am a designer, not a numbers person.

We are building more and more products that impact billions of people across the globe. A wrong decision can destroy relationships, put you in a car with a criminal, or worse, take someone's life because the nurse was not notified at the right time. You get the point.

It is imperative that we use all the ammo available to us while designing products. As leaders, it is our job to empower designers by providing them with the right training, access to data and keep the design process inclusive.

> **"Designers often find themselves solving the "symptoms of the problem," rather than the real problem."**

> **"As leaders, it is our job to empower designers by providing them with the right training, access to data and keep the design process inclusive."**

Abhishek Narayan Singh
Experience Design Lead at WONGDOODY, Design Graduate from IIT Guwahati

He is an experience designer who understands the meaning, differences, and importance of experience, emotion, design thinking, usability, user research, empathy, prototypes, and testing in design and practices them. His interest and curiosity lie in the field of psychology and human behaviour which helps him understand and empathize with the target users which in turn leads to creating and crafting a product that truly matters to users and businesses. He loves to mentor young designers. If you are a young designer looking for a mentor, reach out to him on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn: Abhishek Narayan Singh

Understanding UX and its Challenges

In the *Psychology of Money*, Morgan Housel says that two things impact everybody's life, whether you are interested in them or not, health and money. I want to add a third one, Design.

The term, User Experience Design has become prevalent today, since being coined by cognitive psychologist Don Norman in the 1990s. You might have also heard the following terminologies: human-centered design, design thinking, usability engineering, and interaction design, which comes very frequently along with UX design. Do you understand the meaning and differences of these terminologies?

> "UX designers do not design the experiences; instead, they design for the experiences."

User Experience Design
When Don Norman coined the term UX Design, he said - *"I invented the term because I thought human interface and usability were too narrow. I wanted to cover all aspects of the person's experience with a system, including industrial design, graphics, the interface, the physical interaction, and the manual."*

Today ISO 9241-210 (UX-centric international standard) defines user experience as - "Person's perceptions and responses resulting from the use or anticipated use of a product, system or service. UX includes all the users' emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, physical and psychological responses, behaviors and accomplishments that occur before, during and after use."

So in simple words, we can say that UX design is designing for products, services, or systems

to enhance, or better, the experiences(it's the emotional state of the users before, during and after the use of products, services or systems) of intended users.

UX Designers do not design the experiences; instead, they design for the experiences.

Design Thinking and Human-Centered Design
Design thinking is a solution-based tool for UX designers, enabling them to creatively and innovatively solve problems. In contrast, human-centered design is a design philosophy that advocates for humans, not only the users. It reminds UX designers to always keep humans at the center of any design process by understanding the needs, frustrations, motivations, expectations and emotions of the humans in general and the intended users in particular.

There are many variants

of the design thinking process today. The five-stage design thinking model of *Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design, Stanford*, is one of today's most popular models. The five stages are:

- **Empathize** with the intended users.
- **Define** users pain-points, needs, motivation, expectation, problems, and insights.
- **Ideate** use creativity and innovations to develop solutions, brainstorm, challenge assumptions.
- **Prototype,** to quickly create the solutions and visualize it.
- **Test** with actual users.

Usability Engineering

It is a part of UX design that refers to the ease of use and access of the product or website. ISO 9241-210 defines usability as- "The extent to which specific users can use a product to achieve specific goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in a specific context of use."

It is a measurable quantity. One can accurately measure the usability of a product or website. That is why it is also called usability engineering.

Interaction Design (IxD)

Interaction Design(IxD) is an essential part of UX design. It is the design of interactions between users and interactive products or websites. It is only concerned with the user's interactive experiences while interacting with the product. In contrast, UX design covers the end-to-end journey of product development.

Does a UX designer have the freedom to follow his heart?

As UX designers, we must be vocal for the users we are designing for, but reality can be very different at times in my personal experience. Sometimes,

the business will not understand our logic to include the end users in our product development process; other times, it would be resources and time constraints. At other unfortunate times, the development team will start pushing you to have some functionality, or feature, because their gut feeling says so. However, remember, in all of these predicaments, to whichever extent it is possible, you have to advocate for the users effectively. That is what your job is.

Why should companies imbibe UX practices in their culture?

UX design will cost money and time. So, why should a company invest in UX after all finances are rarely unlimited? One more difficulty with UX is measuring ROI. It is not obvious like marketing. However, there are certain proven benefits of UX design which a company should not afford to lose:

- UX design keeps users at the center of the product development process, ensuring that the final product will meet the users' needs.

- It gives you a competitive product since, in the design research phase, one can do competitive analysis and further validate that by directly going to the users. UX makes you take evidence-based and informed decisions instead of developers' gut instincts.

- The released product requires comparatively more minor tinkering as the UX process involves users at every stage of design which

seeks their continuous feedback. It is also cheaper and easier to change the wireframes & prototypes than the final developed product.

- Good UX drastically increases the user satisfaction of the product and reduces the dependency on customer support services.

- UX also reduces product development costs by its cheap

iteration methods and well-defined problem statement.

Is UX diverse and inclusive?

I think UX design is innately diverse and inclusive. The empathizing phase tries to understand the intended users' needs, pain points, desires, emotions, beliefs, expectations, motivations, behaviors, etc. Then, it comes up with different user groups, which keeps the design team informed about the users they are designing for throughout the design process.
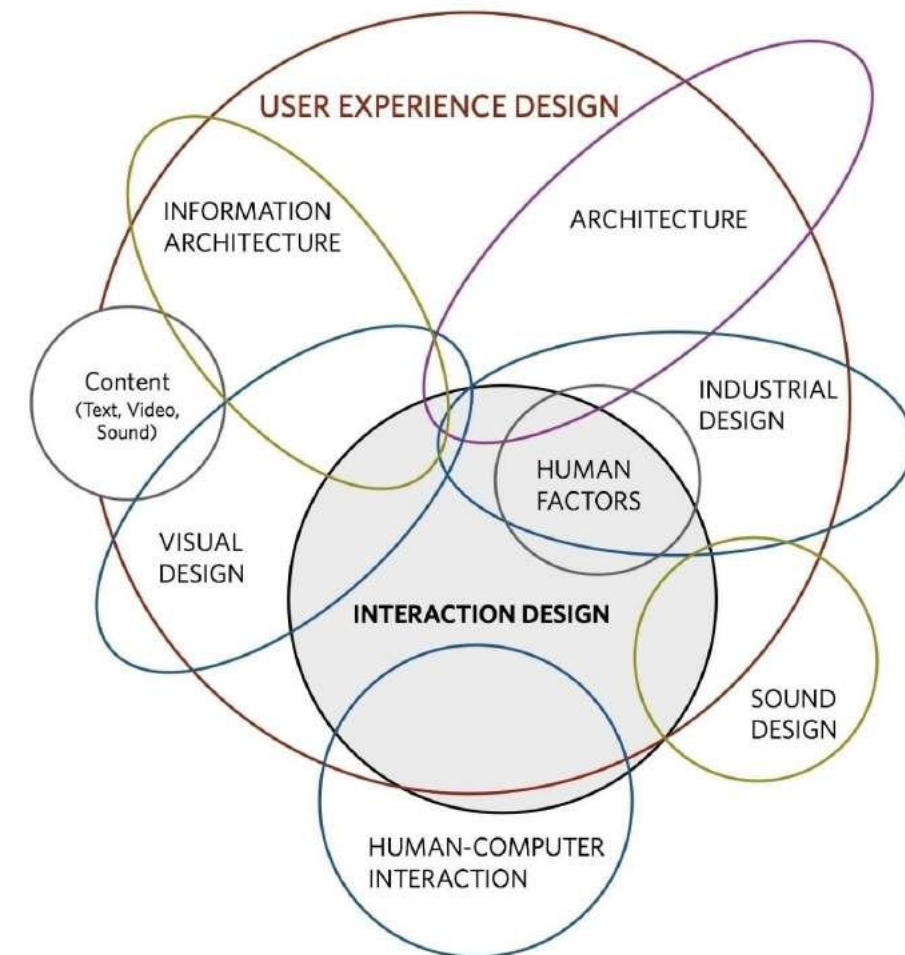

Diagram Credit: Interaction Design Foundation

Dhruva Paknikar
Executive Director at Dominix Global Design Pvt. Ltd.

Dhruva is a well-known Design Mentor and an inspiring TEDx speaker, having influenced and enlightened many young minds at various institutions and organizations nationally, as well as internationally. He is an experienced Creative Director with a demonstrated history of working in the design industry. Dhruva is a pathfinder to the young and aspiring youth, and an entrepreneur gifted with the art of designs.

LinkedIn: Dhruva Paknikar

_____
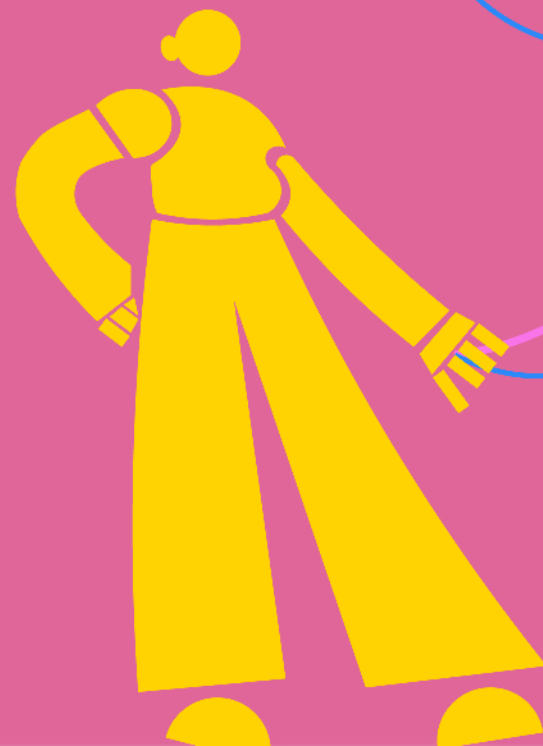
Integrity for Inclusivity

A *product* is a substance that is produced for the purpose of selling. The market is diverse in terms of individuals having various personalities. The customers consume these products and experience satisfaction.

Designing a single product that huge masses will accept is a task that a designer has to undertake every time. When a product designer gets an idea about a product, he has to think through various factors. The end design depends on how the designer uses these factors in the design. The important aspects that a designer should consider are:

- Have a consumer-driven approach – the product should empower the customers.
- Take care of the particular brand, and its aesthetics.
- Timelessness of the product- the utility of the product should

never end.
- Use of sustainable materials and focusing on reducing carbon footprints in the process.
- Accessibility and inclusivity- every kind of a person on this land should have the accessibility of the product.

When it comes to considering these factors, accessibility and inclusivity come last in the hierarchy. Designers usually do not give enough importance to this factor. Though most of the population is fit and able, 37.5% of the world's total population

are disabled in some way, and 2.2% of India's population is categorized as disabled. However, millions of disabled people in India are neglected or sometimes appallingly abused due to their disability. In India, many public places are not designed considering the accessibility and inclusivity factor-like bus stops, railway stations. According to the 'Accessible India campaign', 80% of public buildings lack ramps for disabled people.

The sole intention behind Abled Labs is to design products for those who are

PROTOTYPING

should be considered important factors in the design process. Every design proves right when it satisfies its every consumer. This responsibility of making it capable lies in the hands of the designer. So every designer's perspective matters to propagate a product successfully.

A design needs to have emotion, empathy, and empowerment of the society it is used in and the environment it is kept in.

differently abled. The story of ABLED started with the purest form of empathy: brotherly love. My younger brother has cerebral palsy that restricts his limb movement. To make him independent, I designed a product for him called, 'shoulder walker.' Abled Lab's products have not only changed many lives but have also motivated many minds and understood many hearts. The designers here pay special attention to not only the comfort factor but also a client's desire of being at ease. Moreover, this has brought smiles on many faces, and will keep spreading happiness along with comfort till it reaches every specially-abled individual.

"*Design is not what it looks like, feels like. Design is how it works!*" rightly said Steve Jobs. Every designer should understand this well. Accessibility, utility, inclusivity, and functionality

> **"Every design proves right when it satisfies its every consumer. This responsibility of making it capable lies in the hands of the designer. So every designer's perspective matters to propagate a product successfully."**

Team Weave

Editor
Miral Zafar

Content Team
Zeel Modi
Samiksha Banka
Jigyasa Dixit
Suchira Biswas

Marketing Team
Ananya Dey
Anush Nadkarni
Shubhankar Nandapurkar
Sriram Ajith

Special Thanks

Saurabh Joshi
Arnav Agarwal
Anvesha Dubey
Esha Mehta
Nikita Sharma
Sahil Jain
Sarthak Shambhatnavar
Shreya Paliwal
Ujjwal Pandya

Design Team
Aayush Bidkar
Saumya Kharkar
Yashi Pareek
Aditi Dhawale
Ishan Nakate

Author Research Team
Surabhi Bajaj
Dharati Verma

Guided By
Ayush Gupta
Saurabh Dhankar
Rohit Lalwani