Create Some Space – for Design Thinking's Ideation and Prototyping Sessions

Why

The spaces we occupy deeply influence our experiences, our feelings, and our behaviors. Our state of health, psychology, productivity, mood, and creativity spaces influence us on many levels and also influence our interactions with each other. The spaces in which we journey through Design Thinking and Ideation sessions must be set up in such a way that they facilitate the purpose behind each phase or step appropriately. This involves creating an environment in which the team is free to embrace the mindsets required at each point in their process without the intervention of others who may not understand what they are doing and why.

Checklist for the Ideal Ideation and Design Thinking Room and Requisites

The following checklist provides an idea of elements that will assist you in creating the ideal ideation session and design thinking space:

- **Space:** Make sure you have enough space for all participants. Ideally, the Design Thinking and Ideation space should be located away from work environments, which stifle creativity or remind participants of stressful activities and time pressures. With all their thoughts, out in the open, Design Thinking teams may feel slightly vulnerable to outside eyes, but with a protected free space they will feel more at home throwing forward everything they have to offer. The right kind of environment helps to create a creative work culture and influences the way people see and do things, as well as how they interact with each other. Instead of boardrooms with the CEO at the head of the table, Design Thinking and ideation sessions requires a space that levels the playing field and puts everyone on an equal footing.

- **Whiteboards and Flipcharts:** These are generally portable and lightweight as they are the center of attention at many design thinking sessions. You'll see that they'll soon be covered with sticky notes featuring handwritten ideas. With their vision clearly pinned to the walls, Design Thinking teams and ideation participants are more easily able to keep their eye on the purpose of the challenge at hand, while allowing the influences of their exploration to tug constantly at their understanding. Creating such a space means having room to move, wall space to stick up charts and ideas, white boards or paper charts for gathering data into meaningful collections and to make visual connections using drawn lines and other visual methods. Later on, in a Design Thinking process, the room should provide enough space for building prototypes and testing models.

- **Room:** A light and natural environment to encourage creativity.

- **Illumination:** Make sure to choose a room with plenty of daylight. If possible, you should choose a room with large windows to post sticky notes on—or even draw or write directly on them if you have the right kind of markers, of course! Warm natural colors and materials are more supportive than sterile cold surfaces.

- **Air:** Good ventilation and fresh air if the weather allows for it.

- **Temperature** can support creativity. Research has identified that the correct temperature for sitting and working at a desk is between 22°C – 25°C. However,

ideation sessions and design thinking sessions will include a lot of standing and moving around so you should probably consider setting the thermostat a little lower.

- **Acoustics:** It often gets quite loud when people explain their ideas to each other. Make sure that the acoustics are great and that there's no echo.

- **Elevated tables and chairs:** will encourage participation in the ideation processes. Elevated furniture allows people to come as close together as possible. The upright position keeps participants engaged. Round tables work well when you want people to collaborate during ideation and prototyping sessions. If possible, find a room where there's a couch to use during the breaks or to sit back and relax in while the other teams present their findings and results.

Ideation Material

- Paper
- Sticky notes (as large as possible, a range of colors, five different types)
- Markers (whiteboard markers, permanent markers, many different colors and not too thick)

Prototyping Material

- Magazines (for collages)
- Cardboard
- Tape (duct tape)
- Glue
- LEGO or Duplo
- Blue tack

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