

Designing for Diversity in Organization Design

Prototypes, Process and Play
August 2017

Eli Silva - @EliSymeon

Mutual Aid

Designing for crisis





Catherine Barde/American Red Cross via Flickr)

OCCUPY SANDY

RESTORING
POWER TO
THE PEOPLE



8

MIN
WALK



INFORMATION



BASIC NEEDS



VOLUNTEER





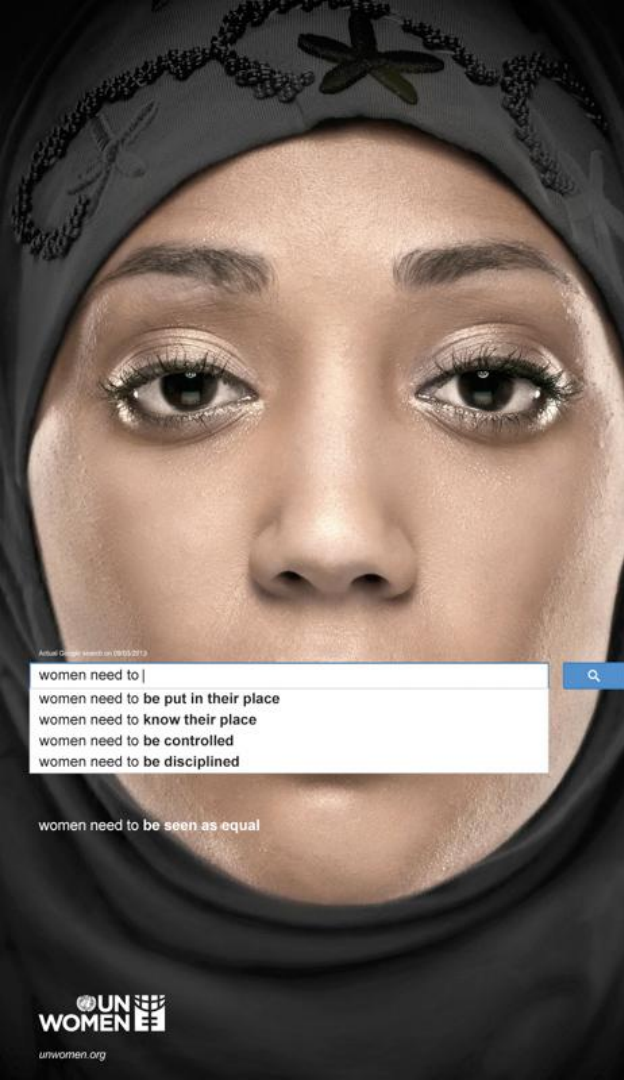
Image Credit: Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times

Occupy Sandy was my first experience building an **organizational** response to real human **needs**.



Advanced Persistent **Neglect**

You design what you are



Actual Google search on 09/02/2013

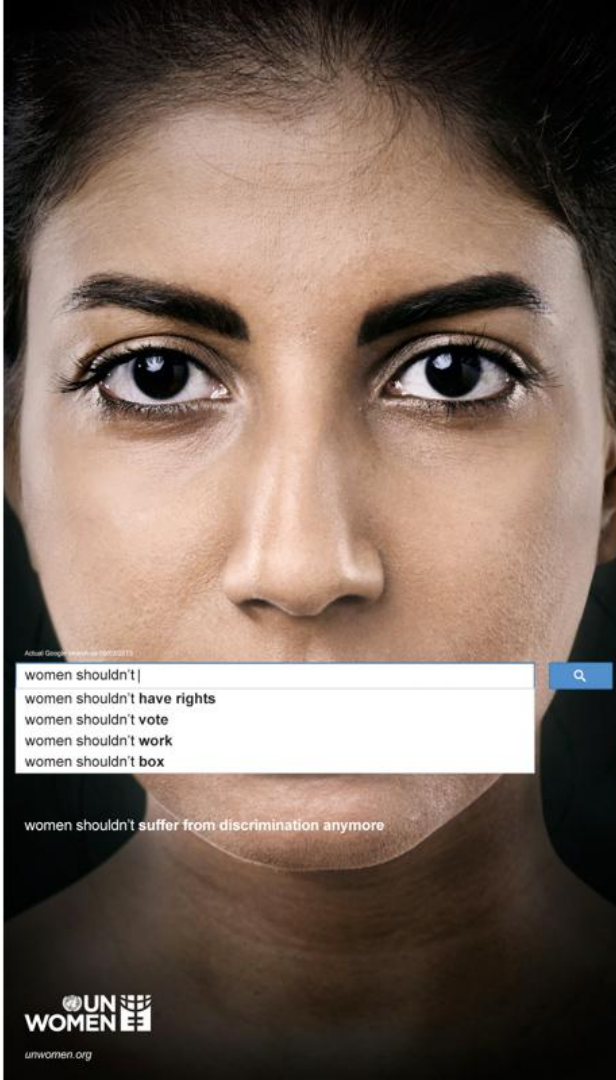
women need to |

women need to be put in their place
women need to know their place
women need to be controlled
women need to be disciplined

women need to be seen as equal



unwomen.org



Actual Google search on 09/02/2013

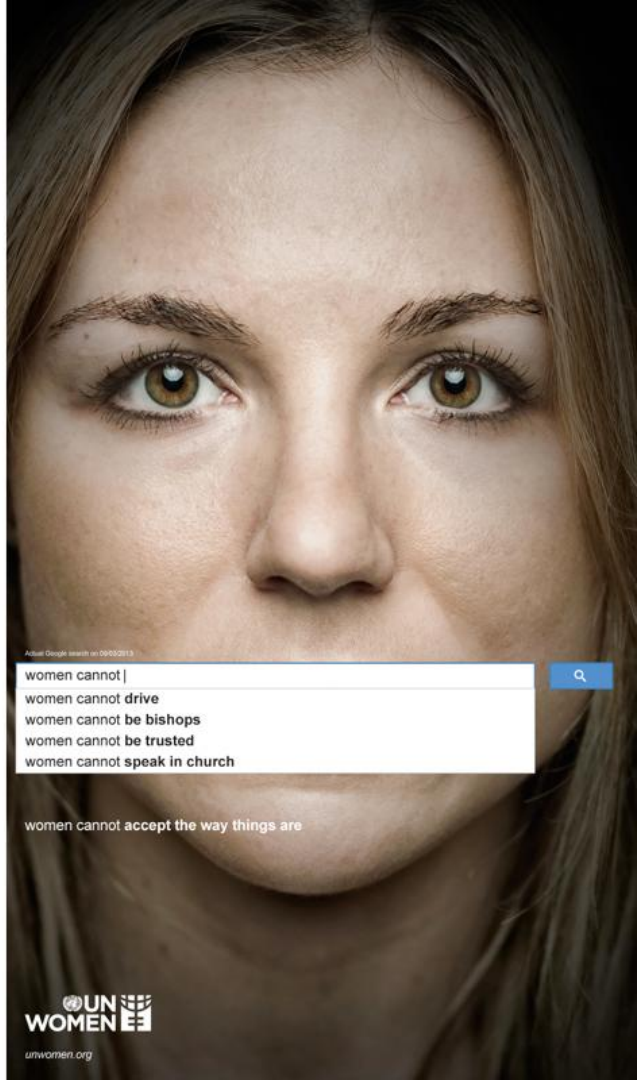
women shouldn't |

women shouldn't have rights
women shouldn't vote
women shouldn't work
women shouldn't box

women shouldn't suffer from discrimination anymore



unwomen.org



Actual Google search on 09/02/2013

women cannot |

women cannot drive
women cannot be bishops
women cannot be trusted
women cannot speak in church

women cannot accept the way things are



unwomen.org

Every single day, the products you ship show customers, employees and the world what you **value**.

See also: Conway's Law – Thanks, Jared



“Approximately 86% of professional designers are Caucasian.”

– Antoinette Carol, AIGA.Org, 2016

“Top universities graduate black and hispanic computer science and computer engineering students at **twice the rate** that leading tech companies hire them.”

– **USA Today**, study cited by Bonnie Marcus, *Forbes* 2015,
“The Lack of Diversity in Tech is a Cultural Issue”

Product Design

Scrap everything you think you know. Listen to the user. Test. Discard. Test again.

Listen. Ask more questions. Fine tune. Refine. Clarify at every step.

Question each and every assumption.

Org Design

Welcome to your desk.

This is who you report to. This is who reports to you.

Please keep your hands, feet, and questions inside the dominant paradigm **at all times.**

No.

To develop a culture of renewal, reinvention, and resilience we must challenge **assumptions** where they are most entrenched.

Lacking diversity is often a culturally acceptable form of **dysfunction**

Lacking diversity is often a culturally acceptable form
of **dysfunction**
...and **business risk**

Scandals may have knocked \$10 billion off Uber's value, a report says

Anita Balakrishnan | @MsABalakrishnan

Tuesday, 25 Apr 2017 | 11:51 AM ET



David Orrell | CNBC

Travis Kalanick.

Share prices of Uber's private stock have dropped about 15 percent to the mid-to-high \$30s range amid a slew of bad press, [The Information](#) reported Tuesday.

The leg downward would value the privately held company at around \$50 billion, down from close to \$60 billion at the beginning of this year, an unnamed broker told The Information. Then, shares were in the \$40 per share range, the broker said, according to the website.

“Some people don’t like to take responsibility for their own shit. They blame everything in their life on somebody else.”

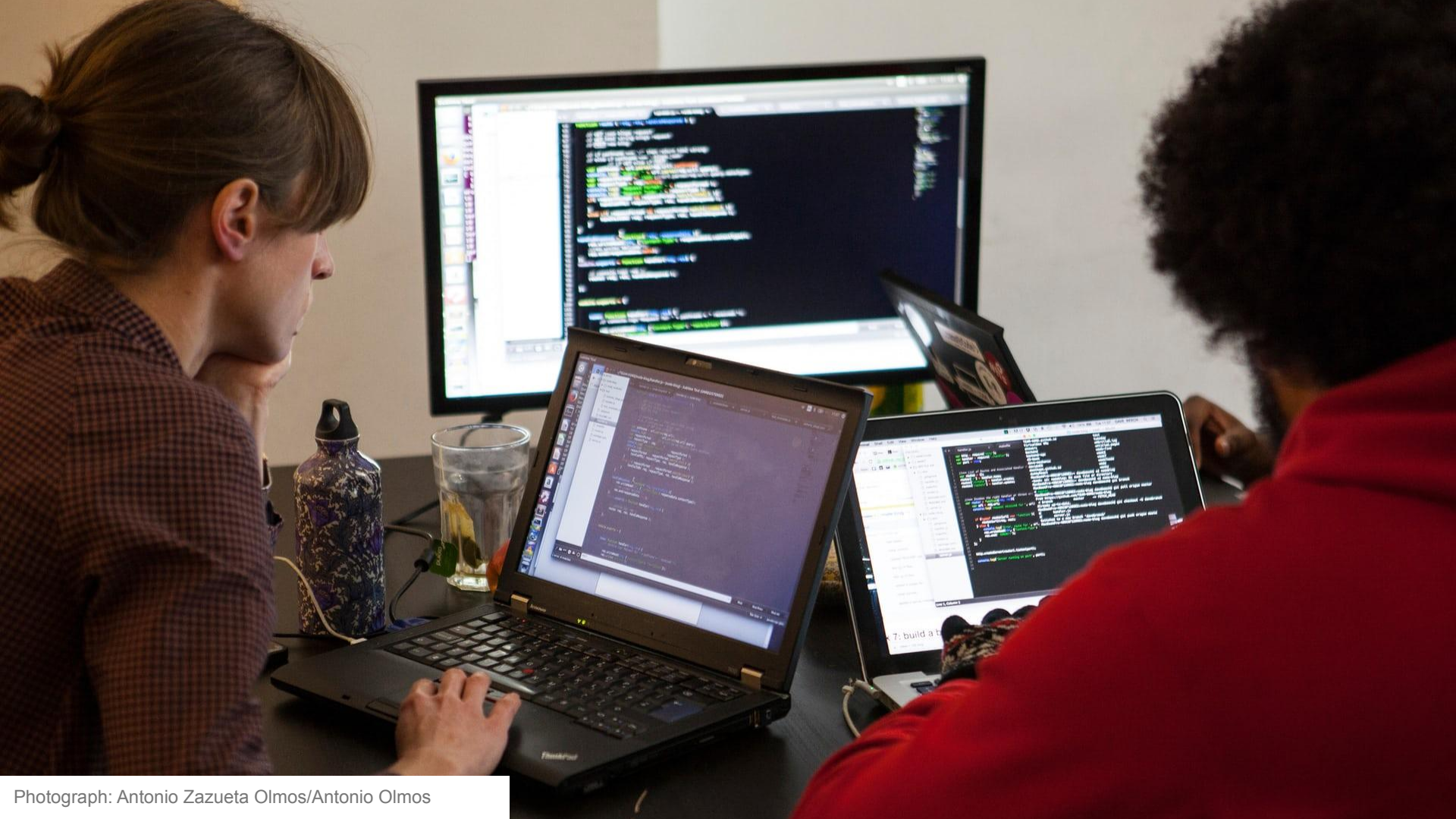
—Uber CEO, **Travis Kalanick, 2017**

Let Uber's recent public shaming be a lesson to all other tech CEOs: It's possible to accumulate so much diversity debt that you can't find enough billions of dollars in funding to shovel on top of it.

- Susan Wu, "Welcome to Diversity Debt: The Crisis that Could Sink Uber"

Diversity Debt (n.)

A concept in **organizational design** that illuminates the extra work that must be done when decisions about culture and diversity are ignored or optimized for short-term gains instead of long-term sustainability.



Photograph: Antonio Zazueta Olmos/Antonio Olmos

In the United Kingdom, senior executive teams proved a **3.5 percent increase** in earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) with every 10 percent increase in gender diversity.

McKinsey report on the benefits of diversity across 366 public companies

Top Quartile

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

35% more likely to have returns above the industry mean

Gender Diversity

15% more likely to have returns above the industry mean

Other Findings

Senior-Executive Diversity

For every 10 percent increase in racial and ethnic diversity on the senior-executive team in the USA, EBIT rose 0.8 percent.

A global company survey by
Credit Suisse of

2400

public companies found

Organizations with at least
one female board member
yielded higher return on
equity and higher net
income growth



Julie Ann Horvath

@nrrrdcore



Follow

My only regret is not leaving or being fired sooner. What I endured as an employee of GitHub was unacceptable and went unnoticed by most.

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8:37 PM - 14 Mar 2014



Your Org is a Product

Culture is your artifact

A design org is a human institution built to validate a product or service under conditions of **extreme bias**



We learned to bring organizations closer to their customers, taught them to listen.

For a time, it was **good**.



The experience of inclusion is the **product** of organizational design.

After spending two years and **\$265 million** on the effort, Google's employee population was only **2% black in 2016**, the same percentage as it was in 2014.

- Beth Winegarner, “Google’s Hardest Moonshot: Debugging Its Race Problem”
Fast Company



503. That's an error.

The service you requested is not available at this time.

Service error -27. That's all we know.



Even the most powerful ideas in the world cannot survive persistent institutional **dysfunction**.

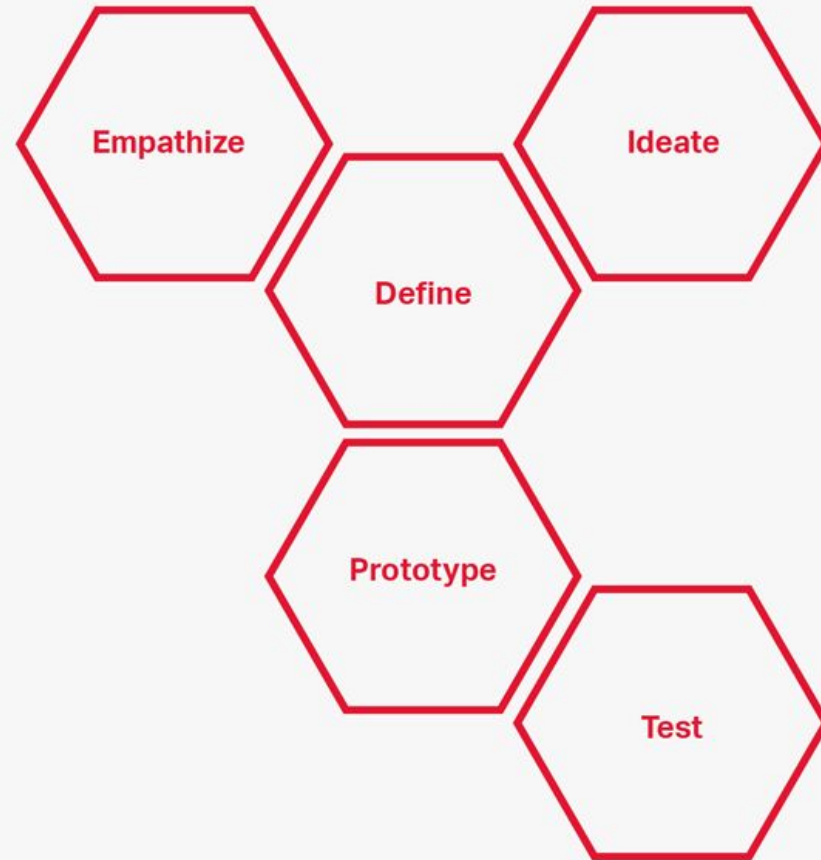
Effective product teams **align** the organization through a regular cadence of interviews, prototypes, and playbacks.

Participatory Org Design

Inclusive Organizations By Design

Taking ethics seriously as design orgs, means we understand that **what we make** is a direct reflection of **who we are**.

How might we use the design process to build more **people-centered** organizations?



Inclusion

Creating the necessary conditions for organizational reflection, course correction, and change **by design**.

Participatory Design:

An approach to design that invites all stakeholders (employees, end-users, designers, citizens, candidates) into the design process to better understand and meet the complex needs that exist in a large system.

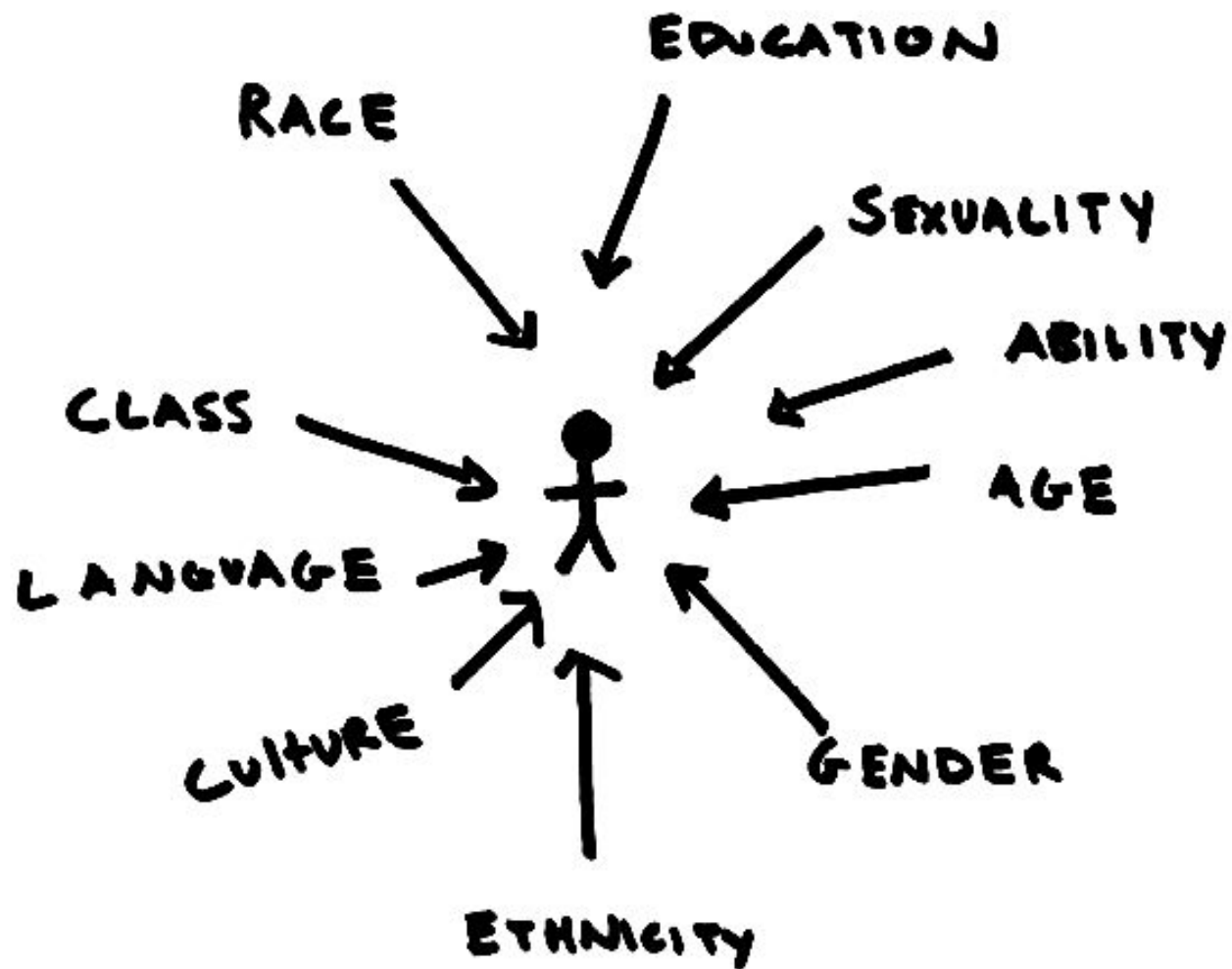
“As designers, we find ourselves not just functioning as human-computer interface designers, but as designers of an interface to systems that **never** saw ‘users’ coming”

– Gretchen Anderson, “Designing for Social Impact”

Build, Measure, Learn

~~Build, Measure, Learn~~
Listen, Include, Empower

Listen.



Who is telling our **inclusion** story?

Ask if the story your company tells about its own diversity and inclusion is coming from the ground up. If not, **find out** why.



What do we look like to the **outside** world?

Look at **job descriptions you control** for words like “Dominate, competitive, pleasant.” (Descriptions that use biased language get 42% fewer submissions.)¹

Run language in job ads through a Gender Bias Reduction Tool like **Textio.com** or **Gender-decoder.katmatfield.com**



What are the **numbers**?

How many under-represented people are making it into your pipeline?

How many are extended offers? How many accept?

Do you know the data about your **attrition rate** in the first 90 days? If you don't have data, start capturing it.

Give yourself and your organization the information they need to design better experiences.



Include.

How do we **value** difference?

Embrace the value of **'Culture Add'** and ask yourself where people are most likely to accidentally wash out.

Make it a **priority** to welcome those who are most likely to spark meaningful conflict.

Audit your definition of and define the value of **'Culture Fit'** very tightly, on paper, so there's no ambiguity. Revisit often to check for bias.



What about **employees**?

How effective or useful is onboarding? Have you **designed** that experience to remove friction?

How do you help new team members achieve autonomy and **success** early?

What is the **employee experience** like for your underrepresented groups?

Do you offer training on unconscious bias and review practices **you control** to change known biases?

If you don't do exit interviews, **start** doing them.



How does our idea meet the needs we have **heard?**

Before you generate a single idea, pick a **feasible goal**, that you can align on.

Seriously and without question, **involve the people you're trying to include**. Listen to them and let them help steer your efforts.

Learn from your own internally marginal groups and empower them to **generate AND implement** ideas for change. (Women, Minorities, LGBT, Disabilities, Neurodiversity)

Define a way to measure impact **before you start** building something.



Empower.

Inclusive leaders consistently **design** experiences of empowerment. They create the conditions for teams to take charge and exercise collective ownership.

Have **difficult** conversations.

Evaluate against honest, frequent feedback.

If your effort focuses on a marginal group, bring them to the table during the idea phase, give them the power to **shut you down**.

Ask, “How might what we’ve built here hurt someone,” **BEFORE** you release it into the wild.



Course Correct. Often.

Measure your impact often.

Don't wait until you've expended your entire budget before you validate.

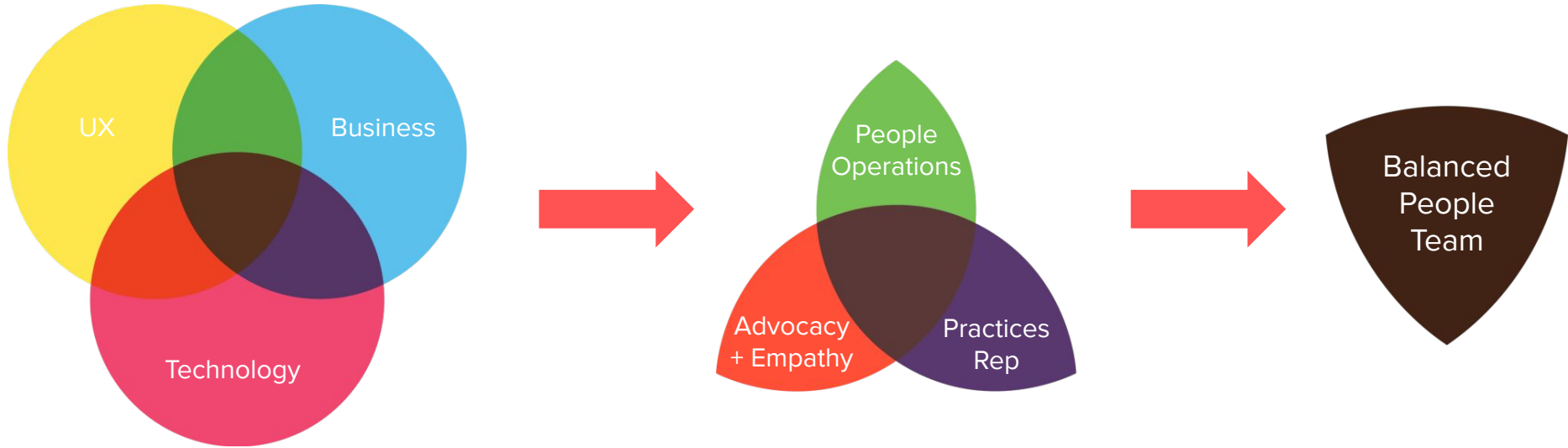
Build a **feedback loop** into new D&I efforts, as well as existing ones, and react to feedback as quickly as possible.

You only get to succeed if you can demonstrate:

- ☐ We Listened.
- ☐ We Included.
- ☐ We Empowered.



The Balanced People Team



Reducing the distance between designers and the many populations they serve is perhaps the **single most important** charge to the design profession today.

– **Beth Tauke, Korydon Smith, and Charles Davis;**
Diversity and Design: Understanding the Hidden Consequences



WHO'S AWESOME?

YOU'RE AWESOME

Thank You

Eli Silva, @EliSymeon

White House **LGBTQ** Technology Fellow.
Inclusive Design Explorer.
Friend of the otters.

Extra Resources

[Buildwith.Org](https://buildwith.org)

[Projectinclude.Org](https://projectinclude.org)

[28Blacks.com](https://28blacks.com)

[Code2040.Org](https://code2040.org)

[BlackGirlsCode.com](https://blackgirlscode.com)

[LadiesThatUX.com](https://ladiesthatux.com)

[XXUX.Org](https://xxux.org)

[AlterConf.com](https://alterconf.com)

[CreativeReactionLab.com](https://creativereactionlab.com)

CHI Gender Workshop, 2014