IDEATION

ASSUMPTION SCANNER

A tool to explore your assumptions related to your project, by looking at your design challenge or your vision from different perspectives with important project stakeholders. Knowing your assumptions is key to ensure that your work is in line with the expectations and needs of the people you are designing for. This tool gives you the opportunity to look for your blind spot by making your ideas explicit and asking for open feedback.

SHARE

FORMAT	TIMEFRAME	GROUP SIZE	FACILITATION LEVEL	REQUIRED MATERIALS
Method, Workshop	1 - 3 hours	5 - 10	Medium	Pen and paper, Assumption scanner worksheet

STEPS

1 Gather a group of people to do this exercise with (between 5-10), for example the project team and important stakeholders in the project. The kick-off of a project is a good moment to do this.

2 Start by sharing your design challenge and/or the vision for your project. Now let each person (or work in pairs) write down a list of assumptions that are underlying your challenge or vision. An assumption is: 'Something that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof.'

3 Ask each person to write at least 5-6 assumptions, and let them do this individually. The following questions can help you to look for assumptions: 1) Why is X considered a problem? 2) What is necessary to help the programme to succeed (political, economic, environmental)? 3) What are we taking for granted about the target group, the stakeholders or key partners? 4) Why do we think that X is a solution for Y? 5) Why do we believe Y is a desired result?

4 After 10 minutes, everyone exchanges their list of assumptions with another person or pair. They review the ones mentioned and add 2-3 new assumptions that build on what was already written. This can be by rewriting an assumption or adding new ones. Repeat this process 2 more times. Each time it will be harder to add assumptions, but this will force you to look at all aspects of the problem and the change.

5 Give the sheet back to the first person/pair. Now prioritize the assumptions based on how crucial they are to achieve your vision and create a top 5.

6 Share the outcomes with the whole group and make a plan on how to validate these assumptions.

Sources

1. Butterfly Works

Benefits

Bringing the assumptions that are underlying your project to the surface.

Tips

The assumptions that were discovered during this activity can be investigated during the design process. Start the validation in the Design research and keep them in mind during the make and test loop. It helps you to find all possible failures as early as possible.

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