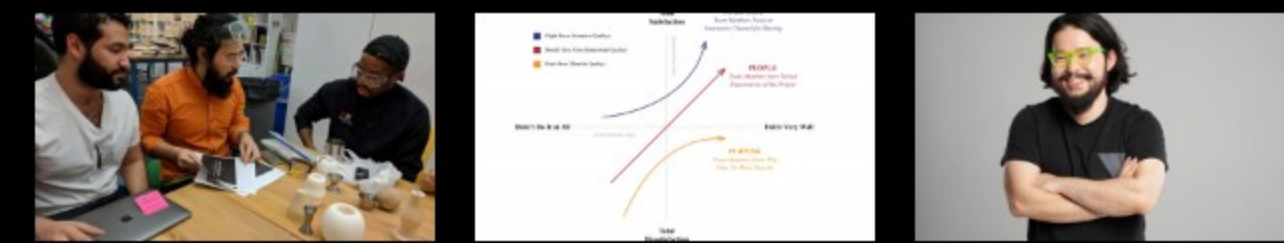




A Design Sprint Project Reflection – Revisit Teamwork in the Lens of Kano Model

2019.12.25



The article is inspired by one of the courses I took at MIT. It was a 6-week design sprint project with a 3-member team specialized in design, engineering and business respectively. The project brief is an interesting topic that covers a very broad range of topics. During the design journey with the other two team members, I have a few personal perspectives and a "renewed" understanding of team collaboration, team dynamics and the way to revisit the word "teamwork" by applying the Kano Model framework. When talking about teamwork, most people may connect the concept with collaboration, leadership or team dynamics. However, my hypothesis of improving the quality of teamwork is based on the three key considerations: Purpose, People and Platform, while in the meantime applying the Kano Model in interpreting the importance of each consideration. The majority of the article will focus more on my reflection about interdisciplinary teamwork during the design process, than on the design work itself or its outcome.

* Figure 1 – The team discussed some of the potential design solutions. (Source: Tony Hu)

I. PURPOSE – Team Members Know Why They Do What They Do

The first and the most important part before the project kick-off is the purpose of the project – Why do we do what we do? Why do you want to take the course and what inspires you to participate in the 6-week design sprint project? The questions above are very basic but also so hard to be made clear and thought through. In school, there is no doubt that students take the course because of the credit or as required by the department. That's the surface level. However, there should be other hidden reasons that motivate people to select the course and participate in the project. Very often, people overlook the importance of the "Why". Is it because people want to know how to become a better designer, or learn how to acquire an impressive storytelling skill? Or are there other key reasons why people are keen to learn and to experience by working on an active project.

In my opinion, the purpose of the project needs to be constantly reminded and "spoken" out loud within the team. Working closely with the instructors of the project is a good starting point. The team members can set up a regular check-in time with the instructors for the team to have more exposure not only to get the project feedback but also increase the opportunities to reflect and to remind themselves the initial motivation. Understanding the purpose of the project can help the team members/students clarify the goal and the process of the project, thus helping to set up the right condition of the project success.

II. PEOPLE – Team Members have Varied Expectations for the Project

In the project, each team member has different objectives and goals, which is normal and true. One of the reasons that team members are brought together is the vision of the project the team is going to achieve. Even though the team has a shared vision, each team member's expectation for the project is still varied. The expectation for the project includes: What is the final result of the project? What is the format of the final deliverable? What is the selected methodology the team is going to apply to? How close is the relationship that the team wants to build with the clients? If we summarize the questions above, the bigger question we need to think about is: How might we manage most team members' expectation for the project that can be aligned with the vision of the project?

One of the ideas is to set up project agreements and team agreements. Agreements are a list of flexible, upspoken and unwritten rules of behaviors that bind team members in a project. Agreements are unlike serious regulations with precise wording, and detail-oriented content. It is crucial to have both project agreements and team agreements and to make the content of agreement relevant to the latest content of the project at different stages. Using project agreement as a way to guide and measure team members' expectations in different phases of the project. Using team agreement as a way to be aware of each team member's situation, how people feel in general on the project.

III. PLATFORM – Team Members Need an Interactive Channel for Sharing

Working on an active project is a dynamic process. It is normal to see and to experience the changes constantly. The content of the project is developed and generated by multiple participants and factors including the team, the client, the leadership, the context, the regulation, and even the culture. Therefore, an interactive platform to bring most of the factors together is crucial in order to keep the team members, the client and other key participants engaged in the journey of the project.

With the advanced technology and the rise of social media, one quick solution is to set up a project instant message group e.g. WhatsApp, WeChat. It will greatly facilitate communication within the team. Compared with the traditional email platform, using instant messages is a more casual way to share the information, the story, and the updates of the project. Team members can freely express themselves and get an immediate response, making the project communication smoothly. In the long run, it is not about what instant message app the team uses, but more about how the team can create a safe-yet-transparent environment that team members all feel safe to make mistakes, to try out new initiatives and to make real impact through the creation of the project. In this way, the team members will enhance their understanding of the original purpose of the project.

IV. Other Elements that Affect the Teamwork

Besides the three key considerations: Purpose, People and Platform mentioned above, there are still other aspects to evaluate the teamwork. For example, how might we choose the right team members for collaboration? How might we establish a transparent-and-creative condition within the team? How might we strengthen the team bonding by collaborating with companies? How might we learn to become a good team leader? How might we set the criteria for success for the team? There are many different types of questions, concerns and ideas on multiple layers that represent different weights. The next key question is how do we differentiate the importance of these HMW (how might we) questions and three key considerations and to give people guiding principles to prioritize the questions.

V. View Teamwork in the Lens of Kano Model

The Kano Model is a framework to analyze the connection between product development and customer satisfaction. Professor Kano developed the theory in 1984 where the intention and the intensity of the Kano Model are to divide the customers' needs into three categories: Must Have (Must-be Quality), Should Have (One-dimensional Quality) and Might Have (Attractive Quality), and to analyze the relationship of the benefit in the lens of needs. In the context of teamwork, we will briefly discuss the potential possibilities of adding the three key considerations: Purpose, People, and Platform into the Kano Model and how it helps the team to reprioritize three key considerations.

- Must-Have (Must-be Quality) can mean the requirement customers take for granted. It is the basic needs of the customers. People feel neutral when the requirements are met. On the contrary, if the requirements haven't met the standard, customers will be very dissatisfied. In the context of teamwork, understating the purpose of why people want to join the project is the fundamental, critical and must-have part. Otherwise, the team members will easily get lost and lack motivation.

- Should Have (One-dimensional Quality) represents a positive correlation. The better the customer service is provided; the better the customer satisfaction will be. In the context of teamwork, team members' expectations should be constantly managed by applying both the project agreement and team agreement, since the project expectation will gradually change along with the project at different stages. The more the expectations are accurately aligned with and objectives of the team members, the greater the work result should be produced.

- Might Have (Attractive Quality) shows when the requirements are fully met, it provides extra-positive customer satisfaction. If not, it won't cause any dissatisfaction. In the context of teamwork, if the team establishes a safe-yet-transparent condition that team members all feel safe to make mistake and to express their creative ideas and honest feedback, it will greatly improve the quality and efficiency of the teamwork.

In conclusion, even though the three key considerations are hypotheses based on my personal understanding, it is reasonable to explain the intention behind when they are put in the Kano Model. In order to improve the quality of teamwork and project result, team members must be equipped with a strong sense of purpose, keep aligning and "calibrating" his/her expectations and objectives of the project with himself/herself, and establish a safe-yet-transparent condition for the project that allows them to feely express and build trust within the team.

** Figure 2 – The Kano Model Analysis (Source: Sheng-Hung Lee)

Reference

- Edward Crawley "MIT Fundamentals of Systems Engineering (Section 2 – p54)", 2019
- Pan Qiting, Nobuhiro Uno and Yoshiaki Kubota, "Kano Model Analysis of Customer Needs and Satisfaction at the Shanghai Disneyland"
- Cary-anne Olsen-landis "Kano Model — Ways to Use it and NOT Use it", Mar 23, 2017, Design at IBM
- Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kano_model

About the Author

Sheng-Hung Lee

Designer, Maker, M.S. Candidate at MIT Integrated Design & Management

*** Figure 3 (Source: Sheng-Hung Lee)

Sheng-Hung Lee is a designer, maker, educator, and MIT AgeLab researcher. He is inspired by multiple domains of knowledge, different perspectives, and he thrives on creating new value for clients in multi-disciplinary teams. He is trained as an industrial designer and electrical engineer, and his approach to problem solving is influenced by his passion for how design and technology impact on and can be integrated into society. He has recently collaborated with the Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) to inform their strategy, service and user experience for the Asia market, and led the effort to incorporate such work in his recent book <IDSA Blueprint in Asia>. Sheng-Hung has been focusing on organization design that creates systemic impact. He was invited to be a jury for multiple international design competition including IDEA, Spark Design Award, IDA Award and A' Design Award and Competition. He is a member of respected institutions such as Taiwan Society of Technology and Sociology, Phi Tau Phi Scholastic Honor Society, and China Technical Consultants Inc.

Sheng-Hung graduated with a double Bachelor's degree (Hon.) in Industrial Design and Electrical Engineering from National Cheng Kung University (NCKU), Taiwan. His work has won prestigious awards including IDEA Gold, Braun Prize, Core77 Design Award, Red Dot (Best of the Best), Spark Design Award, European Product Design Award (Gold) and iF Award. His works have also been showcased in Dubai Design Week, Venice Design Week and the Cooper Hewitt museum. Sheng-Hung taught product design at Fudan University Shanghai Institute of Visual Art and Detao Masters Academy as adjunct associate professor from 2015 to 2019.