Mechanics of Meaningfulness

This set of worksheets explores your product or service in terms of the "Mechanics" of Meaningfulness, the value-based aspects of the experience of meaning, as defined by Vanessa Julia Carpenter in her work on Designing for Meaningfulness in Future Smart Products. You can learn more about this at www.meaningfuldevices.com

Personal Development

Moments of Signficance

Value over Function

Meaningfulness in the Everyday

Critical Thinking

Offline

In each worksheet, you'll be asked about one of the Mechanics of Meaningfulness.

Product Examples:

IKEA Symfonisk Table Lamp. A wifi enabled speaker and lamp which allows you to play music from your phone to any room with a Symfonisk lamp.
https://www.ikea.com/ca/en/p/symfonisk-table-lamp-with-wifi-speaker-white-60435165/

OuraRing. An always-on biometric recording ring measuring physiological parameters such as heart rate, temperature and also movement via an accelerometer.
https://ouraring.com/

At the end of each worksheet, a scale from 1 (Low) to 10 (High) is provided. Please choose a rating to the best of your ability by circling a number.

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Personal Development
Identity, purpose, who am I, who have I been, who will I be?

Personal development can be characterized by developing new skills or developing your sense of self, or by is pushing boundaries of identity and causing people to critically self reflect about who they are and how they relate to others.

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical! Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

How does it contribute to a sense of identity?
    i.   Who am I in this moment?
    ii.   Who have I been?
    iii.   Who do I want to become?

How does your product address:
    i.   The past self:
    ii.   The current self:
    iii.   The future self:

Ask yourself - how does my product or service contribute to a sense of identity? How could it? Reflect on this and take a few notes below:

How does your product help people to push their personal boundaries?

Does my product currently contribute to a sense of identity? If so, how?

If not, why not?

How much does your product/service facilitate Personal Development? (1 = Not at all) (10 = Extremely valuable) - Circle one:
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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Moments of Significance
Discovery, transformation.

A moment of significance is the 'ah-ha' moment, the moment of discovery, wherein world views change and new understandings emerge.

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical!
Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

How does it contribute to moment of significance?
  i.   Is there a sense of discovery when using it?
  ii.   How does it facilitate personal transformation?
  iii.   How does it facilitate an 'ah-ha' moment?

How does your product lead to behavior change:
  i.   Discovery of what could be improved:
  ii.   Greater perspective / world view:
  iii.   New understandings:

Ask yourself - how does my product or service contribute to a personal transformation? How could it? Reflect on this and take a few notes below:

How does your product help people to come to new understandings about themselves, their relations with others, and their connection to the world around them?

Does my product currently faciliate an ah-ha moment?
If so, how?

If not, why not?

How much does your product/service facilitate Moments of Significance? (1 = Not at all) (10 = Extremely valuable) - Circle one:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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Value over function

The result of using a device as it adds value to your life.

Does the ongoing use of your product/service lead to an increased value in the life of the user? Is it more than just convenient, or functional?

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical! Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

How does it go beyond just being convenient?
    i.   How is it useful?
    ii.   How is it valuable?

Ask yourself - who is interpreting what kind of value your product or service offers? Is it you? Is it the end user? WHich end user? The person using it, or the person who is affected by the person using it? Reflect on this and take a few notes below:

Does my product consider multiple interpretations from different users? AKA - Who is the value for, and how does it affect others?
If so, how?

If not, why not?

How does your product facilitate value over time:
    i.   Is it more hedonic - immediate or short term pleasure or value?

    ii.   Is it more eudaimonic - or longer term, leading towards fulfilment in life?

Can you elaborate on this? What would be best for this product and the user, and why?

How much is value greater than function in your product/service (1 = Not at all) (10 = Extremely valuable) - Circle one:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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Meaning in the Everyday

Meaningfulness is different to every person, in every minute.

How does your product or service address the changing nature of meaningfulness? What is meaningful to me, might not be meaningful to you, and what is meaningful now, may not be in a moment's time.

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical! Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

How does your product or service acknowledge the changing nature of meaningfulness?
    i.   How is it in-the-moment?
    ii.   How does it consider what in-the-moment means for person a, person b and person c?

How does your product make people think?
    i.   Does it make them consider what is meaningful to them?
    ii.   Does it help them to explore themselves?

Ask yourself - If someone interprets your product or service not as you intended, what might happen? For example, a chair is often used as a coat-rack. Reflect on this and take a few notes below:

Imagine your product from serval different vantage points, the person using it right now who is content in their life, right after they get bad news on the phone, and right after they get good news on the phone, what changes, if anything?

What happens if someone uses my product or service in an unintended way?
How might that change the experience?

How might that change the outcome of use?

How much does your product/service consider Meaning in the Everyday? (1 = Not at all) (10 = Extremely valuable) - Circle one:
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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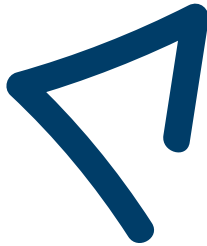
Critical Thinking

Asking the hard questions, analyzing, and leading to growth.

How have YOU as a company asked critical questions about what it is you are creating? Note: This is a touchy subject! We're likely to defend our product and our process. The real breakthroughs comes when you open up and ask yourself these tough questions.

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical! Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

How have you addressed the question "WHY"?
    i.   WHY do people need this product/service?
    ii.   WHY would someone want it or NEED it in their life?

Why is this product important?
    i.   Does it lead to increased quality of life? (How?)
    ii.   Does it lead to self-growth? (How?)
    iii.   What assumptions have you made along the way?

Ask yourself - What am I bringing into the world? Reflect on this and take a few notes below:

Who does this product really serve? Is it the end user? Is it the company benefitting from the data? Is it someone in the process?

What if you had to redesign this product, critically thinking about WHY it is necessary, WHO it actually benefits, the IMPACT it has on various stakeholders (people who use it, the people around them, etc). What would you do differently?

How much has Critical Thinking been a part of your product development process? (1 = Not at all) (10 = Extremely valuable) - Circle one:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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Offline
Does your product REALLY need to be online?

Most of our smart products today are 'connected'. However, a product doesn't have to be connected to be smart. It can use on-board technology to change behaviour through interaction without ever sending data anywhere.

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical! Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

Why is your product connected?
    i.   How does it help the end-user?
    ii.   Who else benefits from this data?

If this product was not connected, can you imagine a way it might work offline? Reflect on this and take a few notes below:

Do the benefits outweight the sacrifices for this product to be online? (If you have an offline product or service, try to reverse the question, if it was online, how would it be different, what would the benefits and sacrifices be?)

"A chip-centric mentality has taken over, one that is guided by an overly simplistic principle: 'Internet connectivity makes good objects great" - Hartzog and Selinger, 2016

How does this quote resonate with you?

Instead of giving people quantifed data (how many steps, heart rate, how much sleep) how could we enable people to pay more attention to themselves and to become self-reliant?

Could your product/service be offline, if it isn't already? (1 = Not at all possible) (10 = Definitely possible) - Circle one:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Framework for the experience of meaning

This set of questions explores your product or service in terms of the Framework for the experience of meaing as defined by Elisa Mekler and Kasper Hornbæk in their work " A Framework for the Experience of Meaning in Human-Computer Interaction" and "Momentary pleasure or lasting meaning? Distinguishing eudaimonic and hedonic user experiences" . References below.

With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical! Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

PURPOSE: Does your product make it clear what the user is working towards?

i. How does the product help point towards what we are striving for?

ii. How is it linked to future events?

iii. Does it help the user answer the question: "Why am I doing this?"

SIGNIFICANCE: Do our actions and experiences feel worthwhile and important?

i. How does your product matter to the user in terms of their life?

ii. How is it valuable or precious?

Elisa D. Mekler and Kasper Hornbæk. 2016. Momentary Pleasure or Lasting Meaning?: Distinguishing Eudaimonic and Hedonic User Experiences. In Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '16). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 4509-4520. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858225

Elisa D. Mekler and Kasper Hornbæk. 2019. A Framework for the Experience of Meaning in Human-Computer Interaction. In Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '19). ACM, New York, NY, USA, Paper 225, 15 pages. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3290605.3300455

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With your partner, ask these questions about your product. Please record your answers clearly. Be critical!
Take a risk and really ask yourself if your product or service can consider these aspects - or already does.

COHERENCE: How does this experience make sense in the big picture?

i. How does the experience of your product contribute to a greater sense of understanding about life as a whole?

ii. Does this experience fit the user's personal beliefs, goals and previous experiences in an expected way?

RESONANCE: How does this experience feel in the moment?

i. Does interacting with the product feel right?

ii. What makes the product click with the user?

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