Bodystorming

Idea In Short

Bodystorming is a dynamic and engaging method for generating ideas and understanding user needs. It goes beyond traditional brainstorming by encouraging participants to physically enact scenarios and immerse themselves in the user's experience. This active approach helps to uncover insights and generate ideas that might be missed through more passive methods. Bodystorming brings user experience to life.

This method is rooted in the concept of brainstorming, but it takes a more embodied and experiential approach. Instead of simply discussing user needs verbally, participants actively simulate real-world situations, adopting the perspective of the user. This involves considering not just the physical actions of the user, but also their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. This holistic perspective provides a richer understanding of the user experience.

The Process

The process begins with clearly defining the scenario or context that will be explored. This involves identifying the specific location, the target user, and the key interactions that will be simulated. This clear definition provides a focus for the bodystorming session.

Once the scenario is defined, the team goes to the actual location, if possible, or creates a simulated environment. This provides a more realistic context for the simulation. The team observes the environment, noting the physical layout, the objects present, and the typical interactions that occur. This observation phase is crucial for capturing the details of the real-world context.

The next step involves capturing the relevant people, actions, and conditions that influence the user's experience. This may involve taking notes, photos, or videos of the real-world environment. This documentation helps to ensure that the simulation is as accurate as

possible.

The team then enacts the scenario, with participants taking on the roles of different users. This simulation is often filmed, allowing for later analysis and review. During the simulation, participants focus on embodying the user's perspective, considering their motivations, emotions, and thought processes.

After the simulation, participants reflect on their subjective experiences and feelings. This reflection is crucial for uncovering insights into the user's experience. Participants share their observations, focusing on what they felt, thought, and did during the simulation.

Finally, the team analyzes the individual findings and the video recordings. This analysis helps to identify key themes, pain points, and opportunities for improvement. The insights gained from this analysis can then be used to generate ideas for new products, services, or improvements to existing ones.

Case Study - Improving the Library Experience

Imagine a library wants to improve the experience for its patrons. They decide to use bodystorming to understand how people use the library and identify potential areas for improvement. The team defines the scenario as a student searching for a specific book for a research project.

The team goes to the library and observes students using the space. They note how students navigate the library, how they use the online catalog, and how they interact with library staff. They observe that students often struggle to find the books they need and that the online catalog can be difficult to use.

The team then enacts the scenario, with one participant playing the role of the student and others playing the roles of library staff and other patrons. The participant playing the student tries to find a specific book using the online catalog and then tries to locate it on the shelves. During the simulation, the participant experiences frustration with the online catalog's search function and difficulty navigating the library's layout.

After the simulation, the participants discuss their experiences. The participant playing the student describes their frustration with the online catalog and their difficulty finding the

book. Other participants share their observations of the simulation, noting the student's confusion and frustration.

The team then analyzes the video recording of the simulation and their individual findings. They identify several key pain points, such as the difficulty of using the online catalog and the confusing layout of the library. They use these insights to generate ideas for improving the library experience, such as redesigning the online catalog and improving signage within the library.

This example illustrates how bodystorming can provide valuable insights into user needs and generate ideas for improvement. By actively simulating the user's experience, the library team gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by their patrons.

Case Study - McDonald's Kitchen Design

A classic example of successful bodystorming comes from McDonald's early history. In 1960, the founder wanted to optimize their kitchen operations for maximum efficiency. Instead of merely discussing layouts on paper, the team created a life-sized prototype of the kitchen layout on a tennis court using chalk.

The team physically moved through the space, pretending to prepare food and serve customers. This physical simulation allowed them to identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies that weren't apparent on paper. They could adjust the layout in real-time, testing different configurations until they found the optimal arrangement.

This bodystorming session led to significant improvements in McDonald's kitchen efficiency, demonstrating the power of physical experimentation over theoretical planning. The insights gained from this exercise influenced fast-food kitchen design for decades to come.

Summary

Bodystorming is a powerful method for understanding user needs and generating innovative ideas. It goes beyond traditional brainstorming by encouraging participants to actively

simulate real-world situations and embody the user's perspective. This experiential approach provides a richer understanding of user needs and can lead to more effective solutions.