

Background

HPI “School of Design Thinking” Teaches User-Friendly Innovations

Status: September 2014

Potsdam. The HPI School of Design Thinking (D-School) is Europe’s first innovation school where university students from different backgrounds can complete a unique program of academic training. In small teams of four to six creative, lateral thinkers from different disciplines, participants learn to develop better solutions than individual experts or single-discipline groups could ever do.

The program is designed for students who are in the final phase of their Master’s or graduate studies or for those who have recently earned their degree. Participants work on practically-oriented, actual “design challenges” that are developed with project partners from industry, public institutions and society. Ten of the twenty largest companies in Germany are already project partners. The training lasts one (Basic) or two (Advanced) semesters with attendance in Potsdam required two days a week. A maximum of 120 of the best applicants are accepted into the program per semester.

Design Thinking is a multidisciplinary approach to developing products, services and concepts for all areas of life. User wishes and requirements as well as customer-oriented creation processes are at the center of Design Thinking. This forms a contrast to many scientific and practical approaches which usually address needs from the standpoint of technical feasibility.

The revolutionary aspect of this new academic program is its multidisciplinary nature: both the students and their teachers and professors come from a wide variety of different fields of study. At the HPI D-School there are students from more than 70 different universities, 60 disciplines and 20 nations. They are supervised by 36 professors and teachers from different disciplinary fields. Specialist knowledge and methods from the areas of engineering, social studies, design and business are brought together into one common approach under Design Thinking.

The Design Thinking method is based on three different insights that are radically implemented:

- Co-operation in multidisciplinary teams
- A six phase iterative process: understanding, observing, defining a point of view, innovating, visualizing/prototyping, and testing.

- A culture of open collaboration in a flexible workspace with variable elements.

Design Thinking originated at Stanford University in California and has already been the inspiration for many startups in Silicon Valley. It is taught and researched at both Hasso Plattner Institutes in Stanford and in Potsdam. Beyond the borders of Europe and the U.S., further innovations schools have been founded in China at the CUC Beijing and in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) with the support of the HPI School of Design Thinking. Students of the Design Thinking method are empowered to generate innovations, to adapt to processes of change and to help shape these processes in a corporate environment.

Companies and institutions working with the HPI School of Design Thinking as project partners profit from the innovative power of the multidisciplinary student teams. With the support of a team, they can, for example, face the high pressure of change common to our time, anticipate it and actively shape it. Over the course of several weeks, the students work out innovative and practical solutions to a task they have collaboratively defined beforehand as a "Design Challenge" with their project partners and coaches. Practical results of this process are the "Real Drive," a drive-through shopping experience developed together with the Metro Group, and the DHL delivery service, Bring Buddy.

The HPI School of Design Thinking and the HPI Academy offer companies and institutions from all branches and sectors the possibility to integrate Design Thinking into their working culture. The Design Thinking process is learned in one- to three-day workshops, in open courses and recently in a three-month intensive training tailored to fit the specific needs of the participants. Each year more than 600 professionals get to know the fundamentals of Design Thinking as well as its practical implementation, supported by experienced coaches. Participants will thus be in a position themselves to continue to routinely develop creative innovations with a high market potential.

Further details about the HPI School of Design Thinking:

http://www.hpi.uni-potsdam.de/d_school/home.html

For more information about the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford: www.stanford.edu/group/dschool

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