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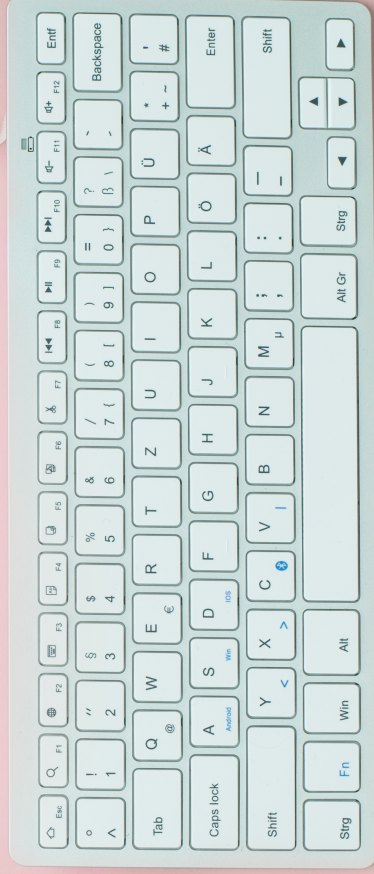
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MOSTLY HARMLESS

Design for digital with a conscience

A workshop by Per Axbom



As an industry we are maturing. Moving through human factors, information architecture, usability, UX, service design and product design we are continuously perfecting the techniques we use to bring value to our clients and organizations.

But as we are rapidly progressing there is also a growing concern for the potential harm our solutions bring. Yes, we are better at **doing things the right way**. We understand more and more about how we can steer behaviors in an intended direction. But how has this affected whether or not we are **doing the right thing**?

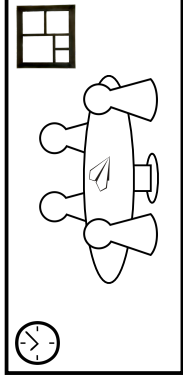
Who is holding designers accountable for the negative impact of others making mistakes, and losing sight of their own goals, when using our services? When people are adversely affected in terms of self-worth, esteem, finance, privacy and relationships - what part have we played? What part do we choose to play moving forward?

It's time we start holding ourselves accountable. As designers we are in a position that allows us to better identify potential and real harm. We need to return to the roots of human-centered design and remember that our job - and our skill - is to put humans first.

Welcome to my workshop.

Per Axbom

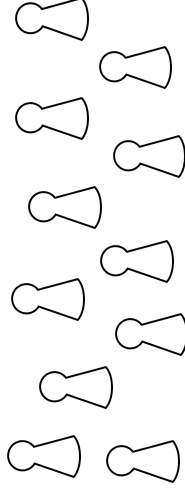
Who is in this room? Why?



Whose voice is being heard? Why?



Whose voices are missing? Why?



Levels of impact management

1. Awareness that people can be harmed by online services and products
2. Awareness that my own product/service can harm people.
3. Listen for harm.
4. Identify harm.
5. Communicate the impact.
6. Contribute to solutions.

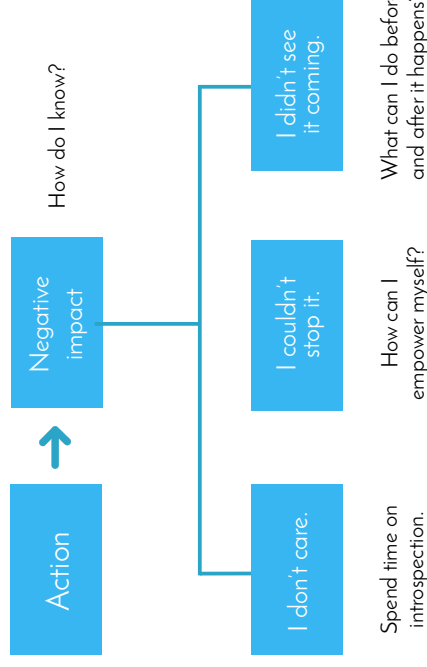
Build resilience

1. Anticipate disagreement with others.
2. Listen. Do not accuse. Do not seek conflict.
3. Practice responding to opinions (pre-scripting).
4. Explain and show how the business can suffer from the wrong choice.
5. Suggest alternative design paths.
6. Run meetings to get the discussion going.

Decision-making

1. Understanding the problem (listen/interpret)
2. Seeing where I want to go (self-awareness)
3. Managing external pressure (resilience)
4. Moving at a sensible speed (adapt)
5. Managing health/capacity issues (self-care)

Focusing efforts



Self-assessment

Your design work starts with you. The design will be affected by your sense of purpose, your understanding of the problem to be solved and your ability to match the solution with organizational capacity.

When you lack control over the final solution, are unsure about your own abilities, and are unsure about the values you want the design to embody - the easier it will be for others to apply pressure that will make you deviate from your desired end-result.

NO \leftarrow \longrightarrow YES
I have a clear idea of what I want to accomplish in my professional life and what impact I want to have on society.

NO \leftarrow \longrightarrow YES
I feel responsible for voicing my values in my design work.

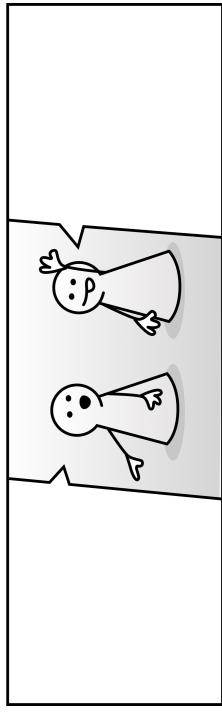
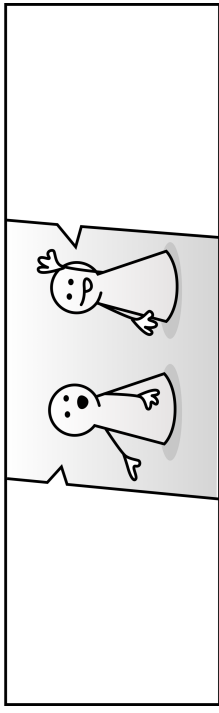
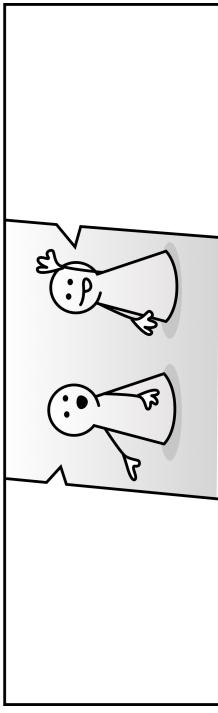
NO \leftarrow \longrightarrow YES
I feel comfortable taking risks.

NO \leftarrow \longrightarrow YES
I feel comfortable with confrontation.

Can you think of a time when you have consciously stood up for, and acted in accordance with, your values? Think about the circumstances that made you want to take a stand. Write a few words to help your remember.

Pre-scripting

Imagine and roleplay how you would respond when you come across ideas and opinions that may result in negative impact.



ALTERNATIVE PATHS



What alternative routes have we considered?

SHORT TERM/LONG TERM



What long term impact can we expect? What is this in 10 years?

ADDICTIVE CYCLES



At what point are we willing to abort?

What is the intended longevity of this solution?

COST CONSIDERATION



What values are we supporting? What values are at stake?

emotion/health/security/autonomy/economy

THE OTHER STORY



What story are we supporting? What stories have we not considered? *people/culture/nation/politics*

REPUTATION AND TRUST



Is this adding or subtracting from how others see us? How we see ourselves?

I control the work I do



I do what I want to

I do what I'm able to

My work aligns with my values

My work is good for me

My work is what I do well

My work is what the world needs.

My work is good for other people

My work is good for the planet.

For each potential impact, grade the variables harm, fault, likelihood and vulnerability from 1 (minor) to 5 (major).

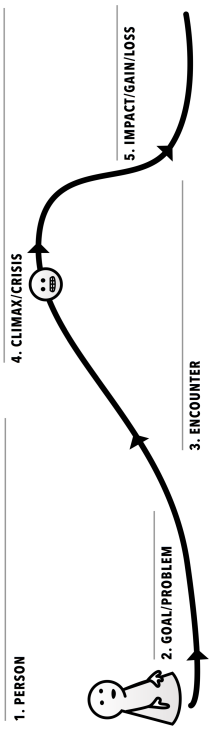
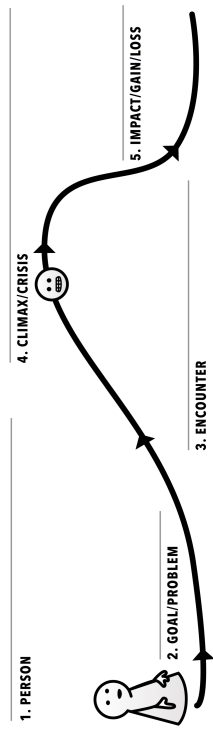
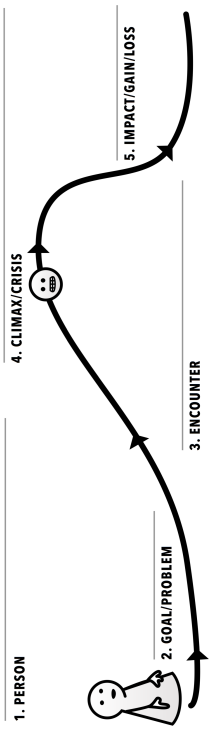
VULNERABILITY

LIKELIHOOD

FAULT

HARM

WHO	WHAT (impact)	H	F	L	V



Impact assessment

WHO could be harmed? (traits)

WHAT could happen? (impact)

HOW **harmful** would that be?*

MINOR ← → MAJOR

HOW much is our **fault**?

MINOR ← → MAJOR

HOW **likely** is it to happen?

MINOR ← → MAJOR

HOW **vulnerable** is this group of people?

MINOR ← → MAJOR

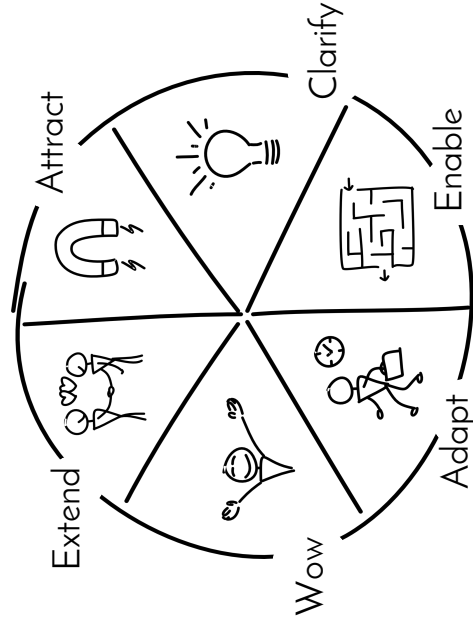
*When assessing harm, think about how deep the harm goes, how many could potentially be hurt, and how long-lasting the harm could be.

This impact assessment model is adapted from impactmanagementproject.com and simplified to be taught in workshop format.

The Other Story

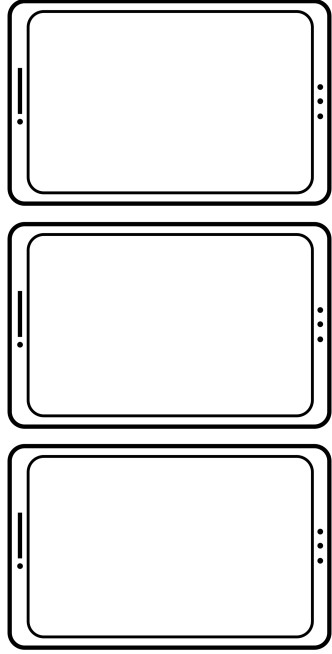
We love to map out the hero of our story and the success our service brings. But there is always another story. When you practice anticipating the harm before it happens, you will become better at preventing it.

Think about all the phases of your service and where things may go wrong. Map *the other story*.



By adding friction, essentially forcing people to think and reflect before moving forward, we are empowering them to make decisions that are aligned with their personal goals.

- What information do they need?
- What do they need to understand?
- How is their data used?
- How could they misunderstand?
- What should they know about themselves?
- How could others hurt them?



There are many ways in which people are harmed. It helps to understand who is already disfavored in a societal context. One person may find themselves at a disadvantage for more than one reason. And when it comes to disabilities they may be temporary or persistent, and one single person may have a multitude of simultaneous hardships.

With design, you can affect people in ways that empower them or add to their discomfort. We need to increase awareness of negative impact in order to properly address it.

WHO?

- Ability divergent
- Age disfavored
- Appearance disfavored
- Crime/distress endurer
- Ethnic minority
- Faith disfavored
- Gender disfavored
- Illness endurer
- Non-citizen
- Racism endurer
- Social class disfavored
- Sexuality disfavored

WHAT?

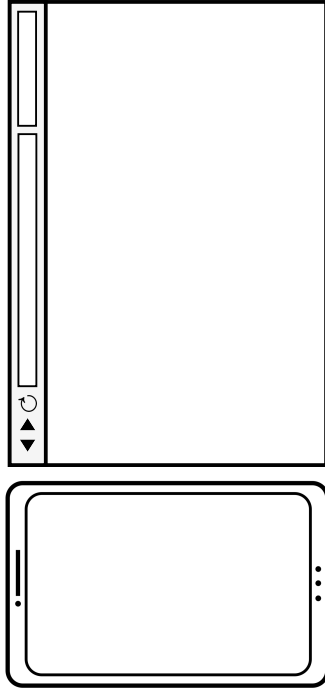
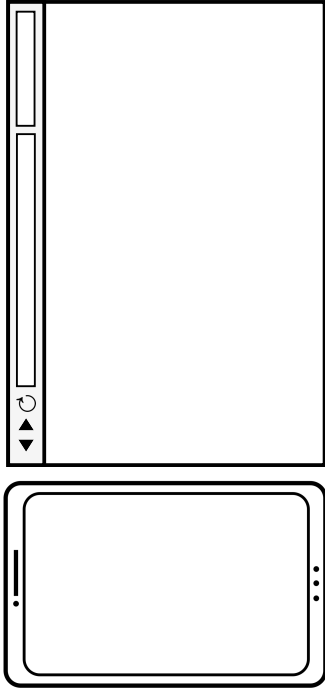
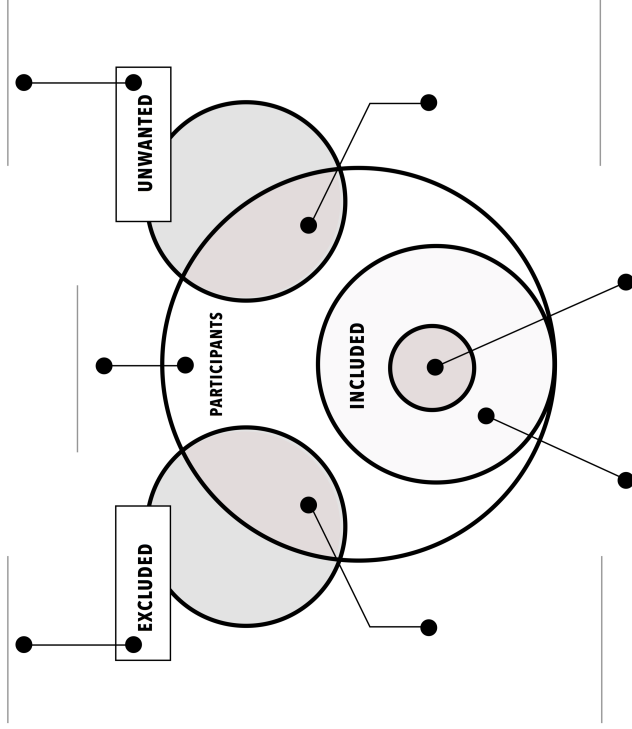
- Environment
- Esteem
- Finance
- Health
- Privacy
- Relationships
- Safety
- Self-actualization
- Self-worth
- Social belonging

HOW?

- Dangerous defaults
- False assumptions
- False expectations
- Excluded by design
- External pressure
- Lack of choice
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of understanding
- Sensory overload
- Time constraints

Think about how participants may be harmed. Use the templates to sketch ideas for adding friction that will minimize the risk for potential negative impact.

- align expectations
- educate
- empower
- protect
- prevent
- shift focus
- think-design



The Inclusive Panda

People who may benefit from the solution but no effort is placed into designing for them.

All people who are taking part in a solution by reading, buying, listening or otherwise engaging. People outside are non-participants.

People you do not want using the solution. They could get hurt, or they could hurt others.

