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Questions for PD planning: Getting feedback on a prototype

Your group should ask each other....

Does our plan allow and opportunity for at least one type of stakeholders to try, discuss or reflect on your design? This may be verbal discussion, written or drawn reflection/discussion, trial of a prototype, feedback on a mockup, reflection through role playing, reflection by making themselves...

Are most of our questions (or activity prompts) “open”, and a good basis for discussion? OR are they very specific and narrow?

Are we focusing on getting feedback around meanings, use, experiences, why/how questions? OR are we asking yes/no questions? OR about something that can be expressed in numbers or a scale such as priorities? Or offering “forced choices” between X and Y? Are we observing people using our prototype? Are we doing an experiment with different people trying different things?

Will our plan let stakeholders get specific information about the design (through artefacts, interaction, other) such that they can actually give feedback on it?

By itself, doing usability-testing type activity (or asking sets of very narrow, specific questions) is NOT ENOUGH. There must also be opportunity for reflection and openness.

Your PD session needs to do the following:

- Do something to let your stakeholders understand what your idea is, what “problem” it is trying to solve, some of the context around it (this then can give them an opportunity to seek follow-up information, challenge your assumptions, etc.)
- Give an opportunity for stakeholders to get a sense of what your idea is like. Let them experience it. The experience is not the same as literally what the idea is. This may mean more direct interaction of some kind.
- Allow them to see, interactive with prototypes, however limited or basic
- Offer opportunities for discussion and reflection. You may try out more than one kind in your session.
- Find out how stakeholder understand your idea. What do they seem to focus on, think is interesting, important? The way they understand or try to make sense of the idea may NOT be at all the way your group understands it.
- Get stakeholder feedback on idea in context. Is it appropriate in this specific context of design/use that they are familiar with and you are aiming at.
- Try to find out how your idea might be given ‘value’ by stakeholders: do manage to express how it might them in their everyday life, or in influencing others to take actions.
- If your idea is a thing or a service, explore possible alternative uses. Do the stakeholders think they would use something (or try something, go somewhere, etc etc)? Why or why not? Push for examples, try to discuss (etc) in a way as to explore the interaction or decision-making.
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Remember to communicate to stakeholders that it is OK to say they do not like or understand things. Their input is useful to you even when it is negative.