Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation
Tim Brown

I.   Design Thinking

Tim Brown is the CEO and president of IDEO. IDEO is ranked independently among the ten most innovative companies in the world. Brown observes the innovation and intuitiveness of the Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel saying, "In every one of his great projects Brunel displayed a remarkable – and remarkably prescient – talent for balancing technical, commercial, and <u>human considerations</u>."[1] Brown is committed to problem solving by fully appreciating the human dimension. He urges, "What we need are new choices – new products that balance the needs of individuals and of society as a whole; new ideas that tackle the global challenges of health, poverty, and education; new strategies that result in differences that matter and a sense purpose that engages everyone affected by them."[2] Design thinking builds on skills already used by consultants in the field. Brown suggests the traditional approach needs to go beyond the traditional professionals. He says, "Design thinking takes the next step, which is to put these tools into the hands of people who may have never thought of themselves as designers and apply them to the vastly greater range of problems."[3] He refers to this integrated approach between the "thinking" and "feeling" as a "third way."[4]

Brown concludes there is no simple recipe to follow in this new approach to problem-solving. Instead, he recommends thinking of the process in three overlapping spaces: *inspiration, ideation, and implementation*.[5] Inspiration is the problem or opportunity that motivates the search for solutions. Ideation is the process of generating, developing, and testing ideas. Implementation is the path that leads from the project room to the market. Brown notes designers "have shifted their thinking from problem to project."[6] He encourages working in what he calls project teams.

Reflection and Theological Application

In my ministry to congregations in transition, there is a window between settled pastors where the system is unfrozen. Peter Stienke refers to this as a "pregnant moment" in the life of a church. I begin every IIM assignment with one-on-one interviews to hear from the many voices who would otherwise not speak. These meetings also serve to identify new leaders to serve on the transition task force and assist the congregation in their self-study. I recommend members who have diverse professional backgrounds and points of view on the polarizing issues in the church. In a way, I see this group of members as similar to the integrated approach Brown recommends in forming his project teams. In my ministry settings it would be helpful to integrate strategic planning committees from the various ministry departments. This aligns well with the concept of interconnectedness and being mindful of each other and the whole.

---

[1] Brown, Tim. "Change By Design," (HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 2.
[2] Ibid. 3.
[3] Ibid. 4.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. 16.
[6] Ibid. 21.

II.   Design Thinking and Innovation

Culture, Empathy, and the Design Experience

For Brown, when integrated disciplines of professionals work in the same space, using the same process, there is an increased overlap in activities and responsibilities.[7] Brown says, "Anyone who is serious about *design thinking* across an organization will encourage it."[8] To accomplish the goals of design thinking (problem-solving) Brown recommends the environment should promote innovation. He says the environment is a prerequisite in which "…people know they can experiment, take risks, and explore the full range of their faculties."[9] Sometimes the "corporate" rules will be challenged. Special "project rooms" reserved for the team are also helpful in the environment.[10]

Brown underscores the need for "empathy" in design thinking. He defines empathy as "the mental habit that moves us beyond thinking of people as laboratory rats or standard deviations."[11] Brown argues that we are able to "borrow" the lives of other people to inspire new ideas; he says, "We need to begin by recognizing that their seemingly inexplicable behaviors represent different strategies for coping with the confusing, complex, and contradictory world in which they live."[12]

Lawrence Lessig, a professor of law and the founder of the Stanford Center for Internet and Society has shown we have moved from a preindustrial world in which most of us were producers to an industrial world in which we have mostly become consumers of mass-produced media.[13] Lessig believes an age is coming where we will once again create our own experiences.[14] Brown argues "The intrinsically human-centered nature of design thinking points to the next step: we can use our empathy and understanding of people to design experiences that create opportunities for active engagement and participation.[15] Brown observes the great length the hotel industry goes to provide the best and most empathetic experience as possible. Brown notes, "Creating an experience culture requires going beyond the generic to design experiences perceived as uniquely tailored to each customer.[16]

Reflection and Theological Application

Brown's idea of creating an atmosphere that gives groups, and individuals, permission to "break the rules" is not commonplace in most LCMS churches; or, when it does occur, it is often an unhealthy breaking of the rules. The account in Mathew 9:14 – 17 illustrates well how Jesus allows for rule-breaking. John's disciples were perplexed and asked Jesus why his disciples were not fasting when they and the Pharisees thought they had to fast. Jesus' answer provides insight into when it is appropriate to break rules as well as which rules can be broken. It didn't make sense for Jesus' disciples to fast since

---

[7] Ibid. 26.
[8] Ibid. 31.
[9] Ibid. 32.
[10] Ibid. 35.
[11] Ibid. 49.
[12] Ibid. 49.
[13] Ibid. 114.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid. 115.
[16] Ibid. 121.

Jesus, the bridegroom, was with them, they were not in mourning.[17] He says: "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them?" I hear Jesus saying: there is a time and place for "innovated" behavior, or rule-breaking. There will be times in our churches and schools when certain rules are out of line with the context.

III.   Brown's Human-Centered Principal

Brown's "design thinking" is developed around the power of what he calls: a "human-centered" approach. He proposes, "The intrinsically human-centered nature of design thinking points to the next step: we can use our *empathy* and *understanding* of people to design experiences that create opportunities for active engagement and participation."[18]

Brown almost sounds philosophical or religious when discussing the success or failure of his design thinking approach. He proclaims, "An organization that commits itself to the human-centered tenets of design thinking is practicing <u>enlightened</u> self-interest."[19] He reasons that the better one understands the customer the better one will meet their needs and that is "the most reliable source of profitability and sustainable growth."[20] Brown observes that the human-centered approach must look in both directions. He notes consumers are "holding companies accountable for the impact of their products upon our bodies, our culture, and our environment."[21] Consumers are making demands. Brown suggests: "…companies have to yield some of their sovereign authority over the market and enter into a two-way conversation with their customers."[22] Brown observes this shift has blurred the lines between "products" and "services," that is customers are not solely interested in a functioning product but a "more broadly satisfying experience."[23]

Reflection and Theological Application

I wonder if Brown's human-centered approach is all that new and innovated given that man is naturally curved in on selves? The "what's in it for <u>me</u>" approach has been around. Instead, what may be revolutionary and new is the intentional manner in which he is opening the eyes of organizations to their vested interest in knowing the human-side of the consumer beyond the product. I see in Brown several key concepts overlapping with systems thinking: interconnectedness, looking both ways, a focus on key leaders, integrating groups, and finding the balcony view. While Brown prioritizes the need for initial goals to be shared between the company and consumer, he recommends there must be a shift in companies for them to be concerned about the service end of the customer's experience. This suggests an adaptive approach to lifestyle concerns on an individual basis and goes far beyond just making a good product. In Matthew chapter 5 Jesus reminds us to provide a level of love ("service") that exceeds that of the pagans (Matthew 5:43 – 48). Members are no longer just interested in a "functioning product" as Brown puts it. Our members are looking for a satisfying experience.

---

[17] Lenski writes: "The only fasting demanded by the law was that on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27). The Pharisees voluntarily fasted twice in the week in their pretense to holiness…." Lenski, R.C.H. "St. Matthew's Gospel," (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 367.

[18] Brown, Tim. "Change By Design," (HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 115.

[19] Ibid. 177.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid. 178.

[23] Ibid.