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Positive Design: Using Design Thinking as a Creative Process for Enhancing Project Outcomes

Primary Sponsor: SAP

Co-Sponsors: OB, MED, ODC, OMT

Note: the Project Management Institute will also promote This PDW

ABSTRACT

This PDW brings together scholars and practitioners working on creativity, design thinking and strategy to explore, debate, and illustrate the ways in which design thinking is being used as a creative process to positively impact people as the beneficiaries and stakeholders of projects. The PDW is the first of a series of PDWs to be proposed at AOM over the next three years seeking to bring the design thinking and positive organizational scholarship communities together to advance knowledge, theorizing and research on how design thinking can impact projects to improve society and have a positive and sustainable impact on people, planet and profit. The workshop will be an interactive, design thinking led session and will produce micro-projects to advance the ‘positive design’ cause within the academy. This session will also be supported by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and will seek to broaden and build networks across AOM, SMS and PMI to advance creative approaches to project design with a focus on beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Key words: Design Thinking, Positive Organizational Scholarship, Strategy, Innovation, Projects Management

Interest and relevance to S-A-P: This workshop comes off the back of a successful full-day workshop held as part of the S-A-P Interest Group at the Strategic Management Society

(SMS) Conference in Houston (2017). The SMS workshop was at full capacity and based on feedback it was evident that design thinking is peaking the interest of our SAP community. Given that the SAP Interest Group seeks to answer, “how strategy work inheres in the meaningful social and material practices of persons engaged in conceiving, formulating and implementing strategies - and its implications on various organizational phenomena...” (SAP Call for Submissions Website), we believe this PDW speaks directly to this objective. We believe this workshop will attract many in the SAP community and from POS (Positive Organizational Scholarship) interested in how we can bring together the fledgling global design thinking movement with positive organizational approaches on strategy as practice, and in developing the idea of positive design as a field of strategic management research, theory and practice. We will especially seek to explore how positive design can enhance and improve lives by focusing on design thinking as a creative process in innovation projects. We will focus on how creative practices within organization settings can orient our attention towards the positive impact of such practices on project outcomes. This PDW will also attract the positive organizational community who mainly reside in the OB and OMT divisions, but also ODC and MED members will be attracted due the developmental and generative aspects of this PDW. We have no doubt this PDW will be well attended and because we will seek to produce micro-projects out of this PDW, we will ensure the PDW will build and develop ongoing relationships and collaborations for all our participants in the workshop. The Project Management Institute will also support this PDW, so it can have impact beyond AOM and hence broaden the reach of the SAP community to PMI members.

Workshop Format:

Running Time (hrs:mins)	Running Order
0:00 - 0:05	Welcome and Introduction to Workshop Structure and DT compact (Tyrone Pitsis U. of Leeds/U. of Cambridge)
0:06 - 0:21	DT Micro-Blast Session 1 - Ingo Rauth & Mark Leung (U. of Toronto)
0:22 - 0:37	DT Micro-Blast Session 2 - Bettina Maisch (Siemens & U. of St Gallen/)
0:38 - 0:53	DT Micro-Blast Session 3 – Peter Bacevice (HLW & U. of Michigan)
0:54 – 1:04	Comfort Break
1:05 - 1:20	Micro-Blast Session 4 - Luciano Oviedo (Intel Corp. & Warwick U.)
1:21 - 1:36	DT Micro-Blast Session 5 - Lena Jaspersen (U. of Leeds) & Tony Morgan (IBM)
1:37 - 1:52	DT Micro-Blast Session 6 - Elena Antonacopoulou, Roula Michaelides, (U. of Liverpool) Omar Al-Tabbaa, (U. of Kent) & Neil Turner (Cranfield U.)
1:53 - 2:08	DT Micro-Blast Session 7 – Giorgio Locatelli & Diletta Colette Invernizzi (U. of Leeds)
2:09 – 2:30	The DT Compact – All participants, facilitated by Tyrone Pitsis, Jochen Schweitzer (U. of Technology, Sydney) and Matthew Mount (Deakin U.)

Workshop overview and aims:

This PDW is delivered over 2.5 hours (including sufficient slippage time and a comfort-break) and will be an exciting combination of presentations, facilitated exercises, activities and project building workshops. The aims of the PDW will be to develop and advance work exploring how we can bring together the design thinking and POS scholars and practitioners to offer advancements in organizational theory, research and practice to improve lives by enhancing project outcomes through better design.

The PDW will begin with a brief introduction to the current state of play of design thinking (DT) and its intersection between strategy as practice (SAP), and positive organizational scholarship (POS). We will explain why there is a powerful narrative as to why and how these ideas belong together in promoting organizational and inter-organizational projects that can improve peoples' lives. To illustrate our argument there are seven experiential **DT Micro-Blast sessions** that emphasize the positive impact that DT can have through projects (innovation projects specifically). **DT Micro-blast sessions** are highly interactive activity rich sessions where the facilitators of each session work with the participants in illustrating and developing a rapid prototype of a DT positive project. These sessions will involve both a quick-fire presentation (of about 5 minutes) based on two core instructions provided to the session leader(s) prior to the workshop. The session leaders will then conduct a 10-minute DT blast where attendees use creative design thinking tools to design a project to address the core challenge raised by the session leader.

Underpinning this PDW is the assumption that DT and POS have some natural alignment, and together these can have a profound impact on projects outcomes. The concepts of design thinking and positive organizational scholarship can be aligned through some core ideals underpinning these two fields of practice. First, design thinking emphasizes a positive approach to solving problems that privileges the beneficiaries (customers, clients, patients or users) in the design process: both the direct and indirect beneficiaries. Also, design thinking is co-creative and relies on empathy, and generative processes to ensure robust solutions to problems. Finally, design thinking relies upon creativity and imagining multiple positive future possibilities (see Pitsis et al, forthcoming). As such, these ideals align directly with core principles in positive organizational scholarship, especially its emphasis on a positive lens for dealing with problems and challenges, positive organizational processes, positive affect and positive relationships (Spreitzer & Cameron, 2012). All these

things are also important to the DT process, which makes the idea of Positive Design a fruitful topic to explore as part of strategy process and practice studies.

An exciting prospect associated with this PDW is the interest and involvement of the Project Management Institute, which is forming closer relationships with the AOM, including becoming a major financial sponsor of the Academy. It is in the project management field where SAP can have a major impact, also where we can envisage major growth in the core aspects of POS and DT being applied by project management practitioners, and pursued by project managements scholars. Indeed, PMI will support and market this PDW to its membership. There is also the possibility of a PMJ special issue on this topic, which will coincide with our current special issue of *California Management Review*.

During the microburst sessions all session leaders are asked to focus on the following two directives in their presentation and their facilitated workshop:

1. Tell us about your own experience of the positive impact that DT has had on project outcomes, especially in terms of improving lives (be it at work, or elsewhere)?
2. Prototype a project that will advance the synthesis and application of DT and POS.

Session Briefs: As indicated each of the seven sessions will be led by a combination of scholars and/or practitioners at the forefront of creative approaches to enhancing innovation project outcomes. **Ingo Rauth and Mark Leung** will show how design thinking can be a way to foster engagement for large organizations. They will show that while the use of design thinking projects is growing, its organizational impact is rarely discussed. In this session they will lead an exploration into making sense of the organizational impacts and benefits of design thinking. **Bettina Maisch** will present the idea of "industrial

Design thinking” and explain how to apply a human-centered innovation approach in a technical-driven organization”? In the session participants will learn about how Design Thinking is used on technology development projects at Siemens, and will develop insights into the challenges related to it and how the positive design solutions can help to deal with these challenges. **Peter Bacevice** will introduce a prototype “Thriving Workplace Index” that uses the tenets of Positive Organizational Scholarship to reframe organizational and workplace design projects. He will engage participants in a mini exercise that uses the workplace design process as a mechanism for articulating and framing pro-social organizational values and aspirations. Participants will discover new ways to use workplace design as a language to decode and construct organizational meaning. Luciano Oviedo will share an overview of formulating and implementing blended DT and strategy workshops held internally at a Fortune 50 company, as well as externally in cross-industry initiatives around the world. He will take the participants through a high level activity to simulate how to harness DT and strategy making to characterize the social impact of emerging technologies as part of the new product development process.

After the break, **Lena Jaspersen and Tony Morgan** will show how design thinking can be used to enhance the design of new product innovations through industry/university collaboratively designed subjects at a major UK University. They will show how DT can be used to enhance the student experience and the teaching of innovation in higher educational contexts. They will then work with participants to prototype innovative’ innovation education through DT. **Elena Antonacopoulou, Omar Al-Tabbaa, Roula Michaelides and Neil Turner** will present findings from a PMI funded study of project managers’ lived experiences of project complexity illuminating the ways positive design can guide what they term ‘*positive action*’ through practical judgments that serve the common good when dealing with project complexity. Following the presentation, participants will be asked to use the DT

approach to develop an alternative way of configuring/designing projects incorporating a complexity perspective. This way we hope to capture in real time the way positive action can become a central aspect of positive design. Finally **Giorgio Locatelli and Diletta Colette Invernizzi** will introduce the project management challenges of end-of-life projects (i.e. of decommissioning, dismantling and removal of infrastructure projects). The aim of a decommissioning project is to obtain “an empty field”, where no revenue stream is generated at the end of these projects. This poses serious socio-economic challenges since the traditional motivation to complete the project on time and within the budget (e.g. to benefit from positive cash in-flows from operations or the availability of an infrastructure) are gone. Since Design Thinking (DT) is a solution-focused approach that aims to match clients’ need and the technological feasibility of a proposed solution, collaboratively finding desirable solutions, the implementation of DT will be promoted to improve project outcomes, with a focus on how DT can support the implementation of technological innovations in the context of nuclear reactor decommissioning projects.

The PDW will close with the compact session during which the seven projects will be displayed to the room by the facilitators of the PDW (Pitsis, Mount and Schweitzer). All participants will then have the opportunity to join their preferred prototype project created during the facilitated sessions. In the compact stage each project group will agree to some project milestones and outcomes, including future projects such as writing, research and other joint initiatives to advance the positive impact of positive DT in practice and advance positive design and SAP beyond AOM.

STATEMENT FROM THE ORGANIZER

We have received email statements from all intended participants agreeing to participate for the entire workshop, and stating that these participants are not in violation of the Rule of Three + Three.

Tyrone S. Pitsis, Jochen Schweitzer & Matthew Mount

References

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