

Designers wanted: Join a Think-and-Make-Tank for Soul of Africa

Wednesday 22 April 2009 10-5.30pm
Saïd Business School, Oxford

Overview

A **think-and-make-tank** is a participative, creative workshop that brings together people from management and from design to use visual methods to analyze and tackle specific problems identified by an organization. A one-day event such as this will crystallize ideas that can be taken forward by the organization, complementing its other activities. In this event, **MBA students** from Saïd Business School will be joined by **designers from different disciplines** to help **social enterprise Soul of Africa** engage with key challenges.

About Soul of Africa

Soul Of Africa (SOA) is a charitable initiative and a self-sustainable project created to facilitate employment and funding aimed at helping orphans affected by AIDS through the sale of hand-stitched shoes. Unemployed and unskilled women in South Africa are trained to hand-stitch shoes, giving them the self-empowering ability to feed their families and provide them with essential health care. <http://www.soulofamericacharity.org/>

Workshop aims

- To use the combination of MBA analytical thinking with visual design practices to help tackle challenges facing Soul of Africa
- To create a learning experience for MBAs and designers which gives them insights into each others' ways of thinking and working

Participants

- 36 MBA students from Saïd Business School
- 10 designers from different disciplines including visual communication, product, service, interface, fashion and design management
- Soul of Africa charity team
- Saïd Business School faculty including Lucy Kimbell, Marc Ventresca and Sarabajaya Kumar (Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship)

Beforehand

- **Setting the challenge:** Soul of Africa will identify three challenges and write up a paper describing the current situation facing the organization, covering strategy, organization design, financials and resources, to be read by participants before the day
- **Research:** Participants will be asked to examine aspects of SOA such as the website and other supporting material before the day
- **Collaboration:** Participants will write short biographies about themselves to introduce themselves to other participants to support team formation

Programme for the day

- **Introductions:** aims of day, how it will work, the three challenges facing SOA
- **Team formation:** MBA and MA students assemble in teams to work on one of the three challenges, each involving a SOA representative and a facilitator
- In teams, participants will use visual methods to support structured idea generation/problem reframing and knowledge sharing to deal with each challenge
- **Show and tell:** Teams report back to the whole group to share insights
- In teams, preparation of preparation of takeaways for SOA
- **Reflection**

Afterwards

- For each of the challenges identified by SOA, participants will analyze, clarify and generate recommendations that the organization and its partners can consider and take forward
- MBA students will work further on their recommendations for delivery within one month to SOA
- We hope some designers and MBAs will continue to work together afterwards.

The three challenges

SOA co-founder Lance Clark and colleagues have identified these challenges facing the organization, each divided into two sub-themes. Each of these will be tackled by one team of participants during the day. Teams will have participants from a range of backgrounds, bringing together MBA analytical thinking and approaches using design thinking and methods.

	Situation	Challenge
1 Marketing and communications		
Marketing/branding	There are a limited number of large customers. Attempts to widen distribution through distributors in the UK USA and Canada have failed.	Clarify the proposition in terms of customers, consumers, products, image: how to put the soul in to SOA
E-commerce	Several sites exist with different products: SOA website, Next, Clarks, Zappos. Tianello, Global Giving	Clarify offerings, functionality, and how the sites are marketed
2 Service operations/organization design		
Operations strategy	Late deliveries and poor service are restraining growth	Make recommendations for controlling the pipeline
Quality	Quality varies	Propose ways to improve quality and reduce the impact of variability
3 Product design and management		
Design management	Constraints include hand-stitching, and limited skills	Make recommendations for managing design eg use of modularity
Product design	Limited number of designs available	Consider how to innovate within constraints

What we are looking for

Designers (recent graduates, current MA or BA design students, and design professionals) are invited to take part. Ideally, we'd like a mixture of people from these backgrounds:

- visual communication
- product/industrial design
- service design
- interface design
- fashion
- design management

How to get involved

To apply, **send an email to Lucy Kimbell** at the address below, to arrive on or by **Friday 20 March 2009**.

The email must include

- your name and contact details and any institutional affiliation
- your design discipline (eg product, visual communication)
- up to 150 words on why you want to participate.

Successful participants will be contacted by Friday 3 April at the latest. Reasonable travel expenses to Oxford (standard class return, UK only) will be reimbursed to those who attend the workshop, on the production of a receipt.

Contact details

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