Embrace the Messy: Using Design Thinking to Get Moving on Assessment

Sarah Hansen, The University of Iowa

# As a result of this session, you will be able to:

- Discuss the key elements of design thinking
- Apply elements of design thinking to everyday assessment activities
- Identify opportunities for embedded assessment in a current program or service
- Create effective, yet brief, assessment methods for capturing student learning

The main tenet of design thinking is empathy for the people you are designing for.   --David M. Kelley
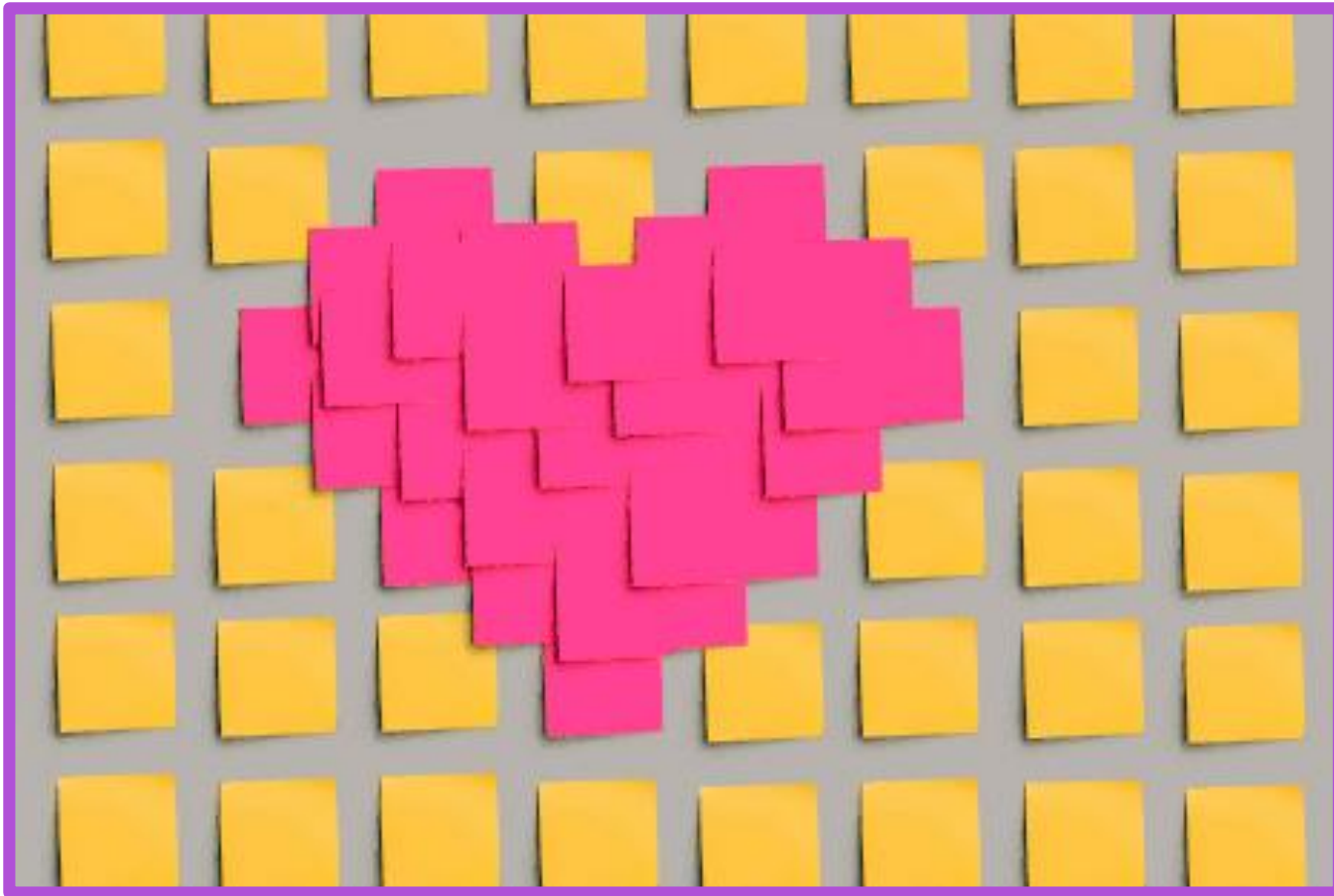
Design Thinking Process
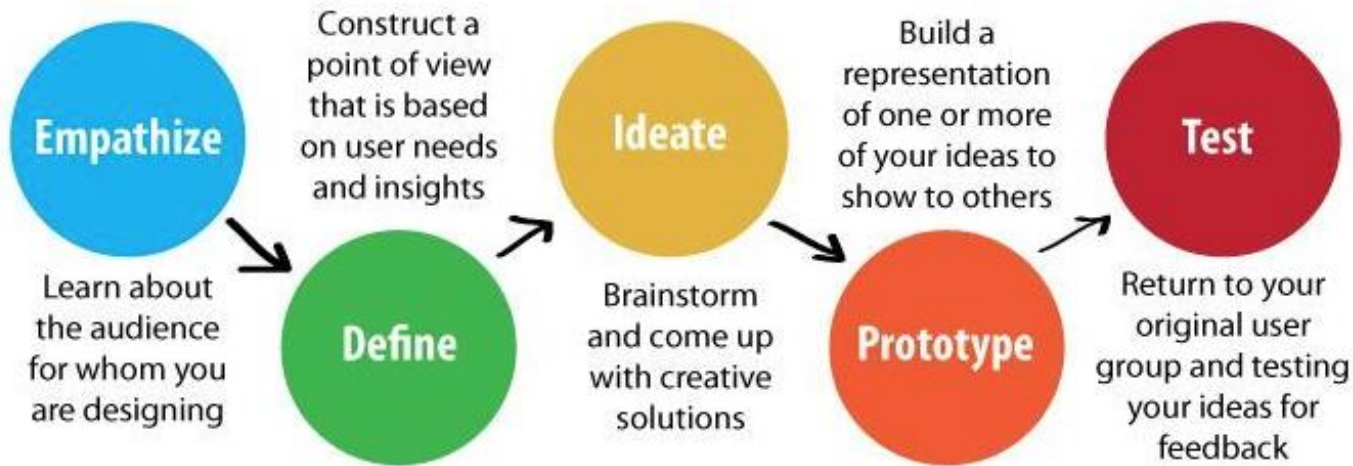
Key elements

- People focused
- Curious
- Collaborative
- Stepwise exploration
- Iterative
- Failure is normal and expected
- Improvement-oriented
- Focus on what stakeholders need

FAIL EARLY TO SUCCEED SOONER.

Why Design Thinking?

- Understanding the mindset of people you are assessing

developing a deep understanding of needs and unmet needs

Consider a wide and fresh array of solutions

avoid the pitfalls of a wrong fit for the needs

Transformative Assessment

- Assessment that truly informs decision making, resulting in substantive change in the learning environment.
  - Paraphrased from Wehlburg, 2008

AAHE Principles of Effective Good Assessment Practice

- Assessment of student learning begins with educational values

- Most effective when it reflects learning as complex, integrated and revealed in performance over time

- Works best when programs have clear, explicit purposes

AAHE Principles…

- Requires attention to not just outcomes, but the experiences leading to them
- Ongoing vs. episodic
- Broad stakeholder investment needed
- Makes a difference when it is about things you truly care about

AAHE Principles

- Is our professional responsibility
- Most effective when a part of larger change efforts

Key issues for today's higher education assessment community

- Linking assessment to employer needs (e.g., NACE outcomes)

- Providing assessment reports that have value to multiple stakeholders

- Better capturing knowledge transfer and complex thinking

- Translating findings into action

-Adapted from Benson and Dresdow, 2014

Why can design thinking help answer these questions?

- It is stakeholder-involvement rich
- It looks at problems from multiple viewpoints
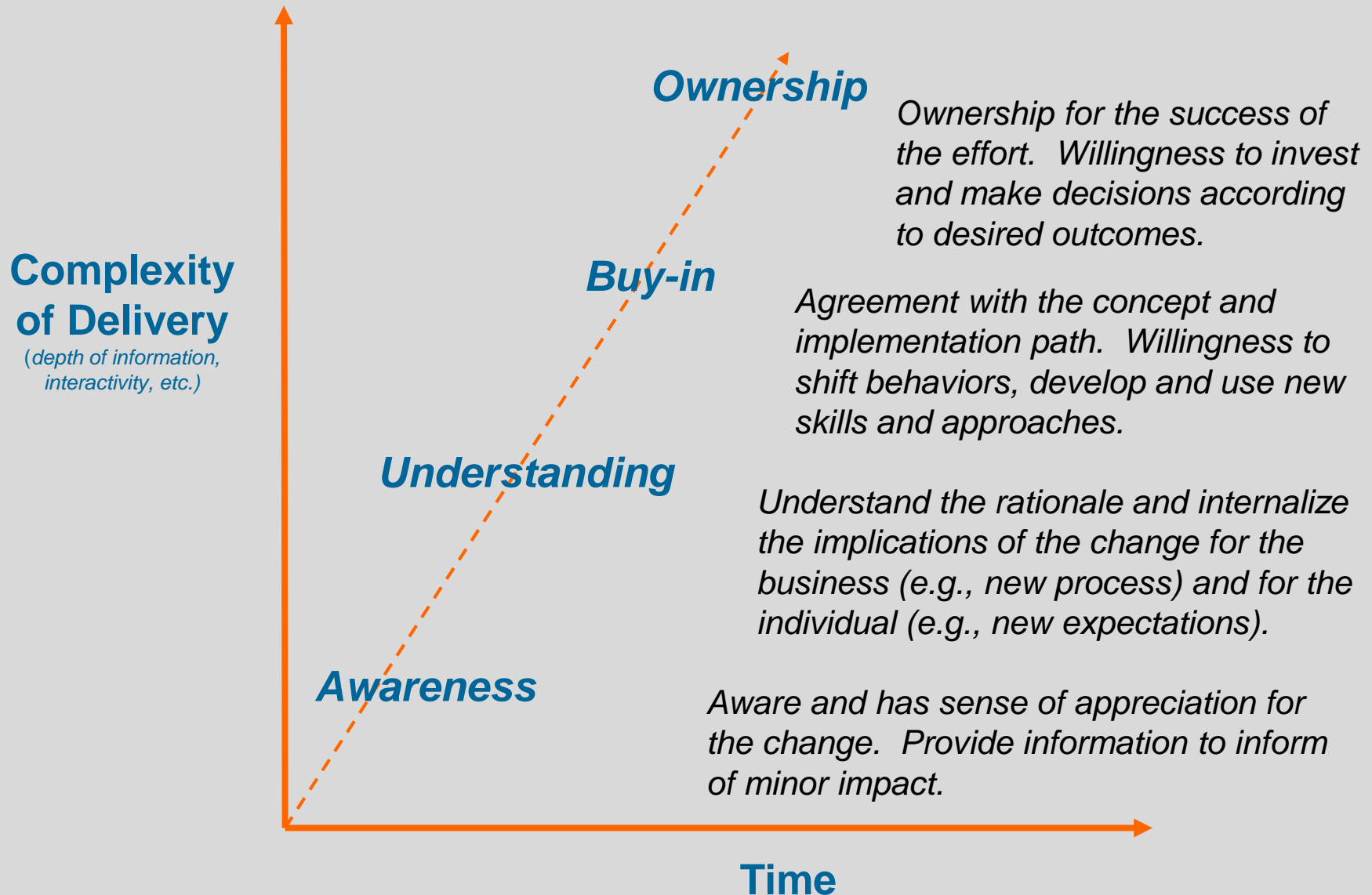- It reminds us that any solution (e.g., assessment method) is just one data point

Design Thinking Use in Assessment

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Journey Maps
- Ideation and Feedback Loops

Stakeholder Analysis – Exercise One

Complexity of Delivery
(depth of information, interactivity, etc.)

Ownership

Ownership for the success of the effort. Willingness to invest and make decisions according to desired outcomes.

Buy-in

Agreement with the concept and implementation path. Willingness to shift behaviors, develop and use new skills and approaches.

Understanding

Understand the rationale and internalize the implications of the change for the business (e.g., new process) and for the individual (e.g., new expectations).

Awareness

Aware and has sense of appreciation for the change. Provide information to inform of minor impact.

Time

Approach for Building Commitment

	1. Awareness	2. Understanding	3. Buy-in	4. Ownership
Definition	Aware and has sense of appreciation for the change. Provide information to inform of minor impact.	Understand the rationale and internalize the implications of the change for the business (e.g., new process) and for the individual (e.g., new expectations).	Agreement with the concept and implementation path. Willingness to shift behaviors, develop and use new skills and approaches.	Ownership for the success of the effort. Willingness to invest and make decisions according to desired outcomes.
Involvement	Need them to be aware of Program events/status	Need their participation in program events	Need their support to move forward	Need them to act to move forward
Approach	Provide broad based communication	Enable them to participate in focus groups, working sessions	Assign responsibilities to people in their areas; Enable them to validate team output	Make them accountable for execution in their area
Metrics	Communication effectiveness	Level of participation; Quality of feedback	Take responsibility for implementation; Meeting milestones & commitments	Monitor/maintain execution; Ensure people are effective in new roles

Who are the stakeholders for your (assessment) work?

- Begin to list as many of your stakeholders as possible.

For each stakeholder or stakeholder group:

- Determine which level of investment they should have (Awareness-Understanding-Buy In-Ownership)

- What do you know about their needs and preferences with regard to assessment information?

Journey Maps

- Helps you follow the path of a student participating in your program or service
- Can expose opportunities for embedded, direct assessment
- Helps gain empathy for a user's experience

Student	Signs up for workshop		Exercise on first leadership experience				Leadership Philosophy
Interaction Point (& potential assessment point)	Online Pre-Survey		Work sheet				5 minute paper
Feeling	Nervous – am I a leader?		Excited!				Inspired
Notes	Could add reassurance to online pre-survey; Collect 5 minute papers and analyze themes – compare to pre-survey themes						

http://bit.ly/1RkS9cx

Ideation and Feedback Loops

- Preliminary aspect of prototyping
- Can fail quickly and cheaply because you don't create the whole 'product'
- Let's you test possibilities
- Ensures stakeholders are involved in the process
- Serves as formative assessment

Ideation

- Working quickly with your partner – write as many unique ideas as you can come up with to answer this challenge:

- *"How might we design assessment that captures what students learn from student employment <u>without sending out a survey</u>?"*

Feedback from:
Which Prototype?

_____

_____

User likes	User suggestions
➕ **🔺**	
▮? **💡**	
User wonders	User ideates

What gets you stuck with assessment?

Getting Unstuck

- Simplify
  - 3-2-1 assessments
  - 1,2,5 minute papers
  - Rubrics for performance
- Use design thinking methods
- Zero in on one stakeholder point of view
- Accept that being stuck is normal sometimes
- Invite collaboration
- Ask students

Resources

- **Email me: sarah-hansen@uiowa.edu**
- **IDEO.org (Field Guide to Human Centered Design)**
- **Stanford dSchool (Use our methods)**
- **Design Thinking Comes of Age (Kolko, HBR)**

Questions?

Assessment rocks!