

O2 Product Development Aid

Results of the plenary discussion of the O2 meeting

Thursday 29th of June 2006

This document gives a brief overview of the plenary discussion about Product Development Aid in the NH Hotel, Utrecht. There were 50+ people present and after 4 interesting presentations, the audience had the chance to express themselves on the topic. They gave statements on Product Development Aid, and discussed about these statements in 3 subgroups.

Statements of the audience

- * You must submerge in the local culture to be able to design a good product. Don't force your own culturally defined values.
- * You need an open eye for what is needed
- * Equality
- * The products identity is determined by its use and context, not by its design.
- * Good, successful designs are answers to very basic needs
- * Designing for developing countries needs a different way of thinking
- * The western companies should shift their idea that they can not earn money at the Bottom of the Pyramid
- * Sustainability is only a fashion word. Who determines sustainability?
- * Sustainable chain = sustainable design
- * Multinationals are bad
- * A product developed by western companies & designers is bad for the local economy!
- * It is so difficult to identify the problem owner
- * Commercial consumer products spread the fastest to a larger scale
- * Multinationals are good
- * The best initiatives come from the local community
- * Accept help of other people, when you want to help people in development countries.
- * Imposing cultural difference
- * Developing countries should develop themselves
- * Globalization will save us all
- * Product designers here and local can make a difference
- * Simple and cheap maintenance is a success factor
- * Local culture is the fall-pit for Western designers

Discussion statement 1

Multinationals are the driving force in product development aid (vs. locals)

The discussion is more about the formulation of some aspects. This question gives no scale for locals and multinationals. Furthermore they can be discussed about an inner force: is it a personal force or the companies force?

- 'driving force' → reality of commitment?
Shell → CSR → Product Development Aid
- financially driven → multinationals from overseas
- driving force as successful → commitment locals
- what is the definition of multinationals?
- definition of driving forces?
- definition of Product Development Aid?

Product development is no issue. Distribution is.

The person who wrote down this statement is in the group. He briefly explains that the statement is about the risk is too high to scale up the production of the project. And in his experience the bottleneck to upscale the production is the distribution possibilities. Not everybody agrees, local production could be possible. And with good product development you should be able to avoid the distribution problem. It is a part of the product development process to deal with the possibilities in the distribution chain.

- Both are important → People won't buy it
→ Make it available
- Design: Western, overkill (esthetics)
- Local design does not require distribution
- BoP: distribution cannot make up for large markets
- Service / Materials
- How to sell
- Product development: avoid distribution / small local producers (they will spread it)

Conclusion: 4 people agrees with the statement, 2 people disagree

Sustainability is a fashion word. Who determines sustainability?

Sustainability is very broad. With this night on product development aid, we can determine it in the context of developing countries. But then still sustainability is very broad, a few synonyms: durable, environment, social aspect of sustainability, long lifetime.

Can designers use it other way around: because people use sustainable products, an awareness on sustainability grows?

Discussion statement 2

The BoP-consumer can't talk without a prototype. If you want to do consumer research, you have to produce a prototype as soon as possible

- Yes, because they don't have a reference for a lot of products
- Yes, it's also true for richer people. You should have more prototypes, so consumers can choose
- No, but research is more difficult (questionnaires) and you don't know how good it will be
- It depends on the product. If they are familiar with it, a prototype is not necessary
- A prototype can also exclude other product possibilities
- Different phases, different tools: drawing (questionnaires) prototype (..)

Conclusion: (probably) yes.

It's not just just about consumer-oriented design. NGOs have to be positive towards your product. Cooperation with them is very important. They have complementary knowledge with the companies. They can help you with subsidized marketing.

The majority of the group disagrees with the statement. The designer should always consider all stakeholders, but the end-consumer is the most important. In case of BoP: design with the NGOs, use their knowledge to improve your design.

- Designer: all stakeholders
- NGO's should consider end-users wishes → they also know these → USE THEM!
- Distribution through NGO's
- Depends on the design goal: cheap / quality

Working in Product Development Aid = highest risk factor = feelings of anxiety about your business

- If there is the possibility in your project to make small steps, do so!
- There is a lot of change for success as well. There has not been much done over there. There are high opportunities. → High risk / high opportunities
- It is also based on personal characteristics, like how entrepreneurial you are.