

The 4 Voices of Collaborative Innovation



THE VOICE OF EXPERTISE is about understanding with our heads. This is the voice of rational research and analysis, of selecting and tracking metrics, of measuring effectiveness.

PRINCIPLES

Create a goal that's specific enough to measure progress.
Treat everything as a hypothesis—and test these.
See the whole system.

METHODS

Map barriers and emerging opportunities.
Invite experts to help the group learn more about the issues.
Eliminate limiting factors.

TRAPS

Believing that rigorous analysis is more true than real-world experience.
Getting stuck in trying to understand the issue (Analysis Paralysis).
Going around and around (Death by debate).

GIFTS

Rigor.
Discipline.
Methodical analysis.
Systemic understanding.



THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE is about understanding with our hearts. This is the voice that reminds us to listen for pain and hope, to deepen our insight into the lives of others, to feel empathy.

PRINCIPLES

Start understanding the system from the experiences of real people.
Understand the context to create full solutions.

METHODS

Context experts.
Experience models.
Experience prototypes.
Journey maps.
Personas.

TRAPS

Weighing lived experience over systemic understanding.
Wanting to help without understanding impact.
Settling for sympathy.
Developing a “we’re helping the helpless” mindset.

GIFTS

Focus.
Empathy.
Perspective.
Grounded solutions.



THE VOICE OF DESIGN is about working with our hands. This is a creative, dynamic voice reminding us to work openly and collaboratively and iterate early and often to create solutions faster.

PRINCIPLES

Test ideas early.
Fail early and often.
Quick rounds of brief feedback help more than one big round.
Go with what's working.

METHODS

Physical modeling.
Storyboarding.
Offering questions not suggestions in feedback rounds.
Storyboards and scenarios to focus on HOW, not IF.

TRAPS

Losing steam when we hit hard realities and political resistance.
Incremental mindset.
Experimentation over implementation.
Losing track of the purpose and desired outcomes.

GIFTS

Progress.
Fast results.
Momentum.
Fast learning.



THE VOICE OF INTENT is about working from our spirit and our highest purpose. This voice invites us to dream big, bring our passion, and to aspire for better, more meaningful futures for all.

PRINCIPLES

Craft a unifying purpose.
Revisit the purpose in times of doubt or confusion.
Deepen purpose over time.
Differentiate, then integrate.

METHODS

Purpose for the group and purposes for each meeting.
Share individuals hopes and intentions.
Define both focus and frame.
Discuss frustrations and fears.

TRAPS

Dreaming over doing.
Assuming unity without testing it.
Groupthink.
Failing to adapt purpose and strategies to changing context.

GIFTS

Clear purpose.
Personal growth.
Deep engagement.
Diversity within unity.