The wallet challenge

For guidance on how to facilitate a session using this see the excellent Teaching Entrepreneurship website here

Although this is using the task of designing an ideal wallet you can substitute anything else – a backpack, a travel bag, etc.

We're going to design the ideal wallet.

You've got 3 minutes to come up with your best shot – capture your design here

How did that feel?

OK, perhaps a little empty, lacking in focus? Not necessarily something to get excited about?

That was a typical problem-solving approach, taking on a given problem, working using your own opinions and experience to guide you, and with a solution in mind to be designed. It's all a bit insulated, as if you're working in your own little bubble?

Let's try something different. This time work in pairs and begin by interviewing each other.

The challenge is to design something useful and meaningful for your partner. Stay with the overall idea of the ideal wallet but try and find out what a wallet means and does for your partner. How do they use it? Get them to show you theirs, walk you through its contents and why they are there. There's no right answer but you're trying to understand how something like this fits in their world.

Make your notes here

Now dig deeper.

Interview them again but try and get a real understanding – build empathy with them. Dig deeper, look for stories, try and get a sense of what matters in their lives, what's important to them. Explore feelings, get as rich a sense of who they are and how their world works as you can.

Make more notes here

Now reframe the problem

Take some time to reflect on your interviews and what you've learned about your partner. What insights have you gained? What might help you now in thinking about designing something for them?

Goals and Wishes:
What is your partner trying to achieve?
*use verbs

Insights: New learnings about your partner's feelings and motivations. What's something you see about your partner's experience that maybe s/he doesn't see?*
*make inferences from what you heard

Now reformulate the problem you're going to work on….

Try to capture what you've learned in the form of a 'design brief' – a statement of what and why you're going to try and work on. Take a stand, find a point of view….
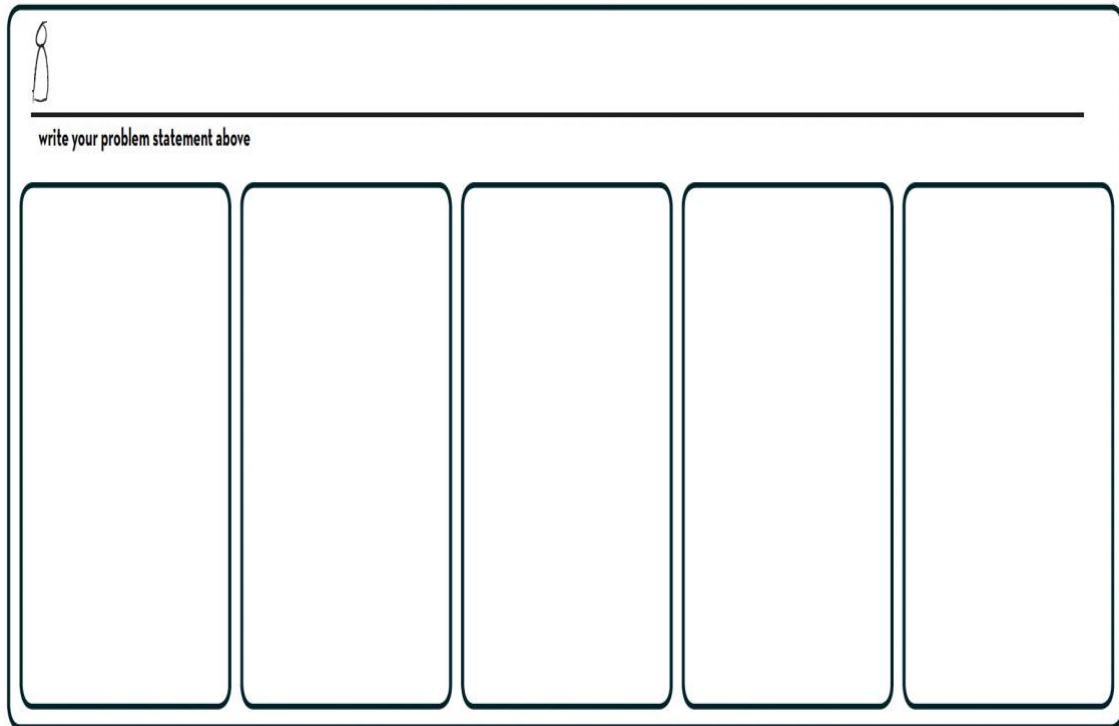
_____
partner's name/description

needs a way to _____
user's need

because (or "but . . ." or "Surprisingly . . .")
[circle one]

_____

_____
insight

Brainstorming ideas….

Now try and generate ideas for how you might help, solutions that might work for them.
Sketch out at least 5 ideas, don't worry about detail , just capture the core idea. Use
pictures, slogans, anything to help – but you've only got 5 minutes!

write your problem statement above
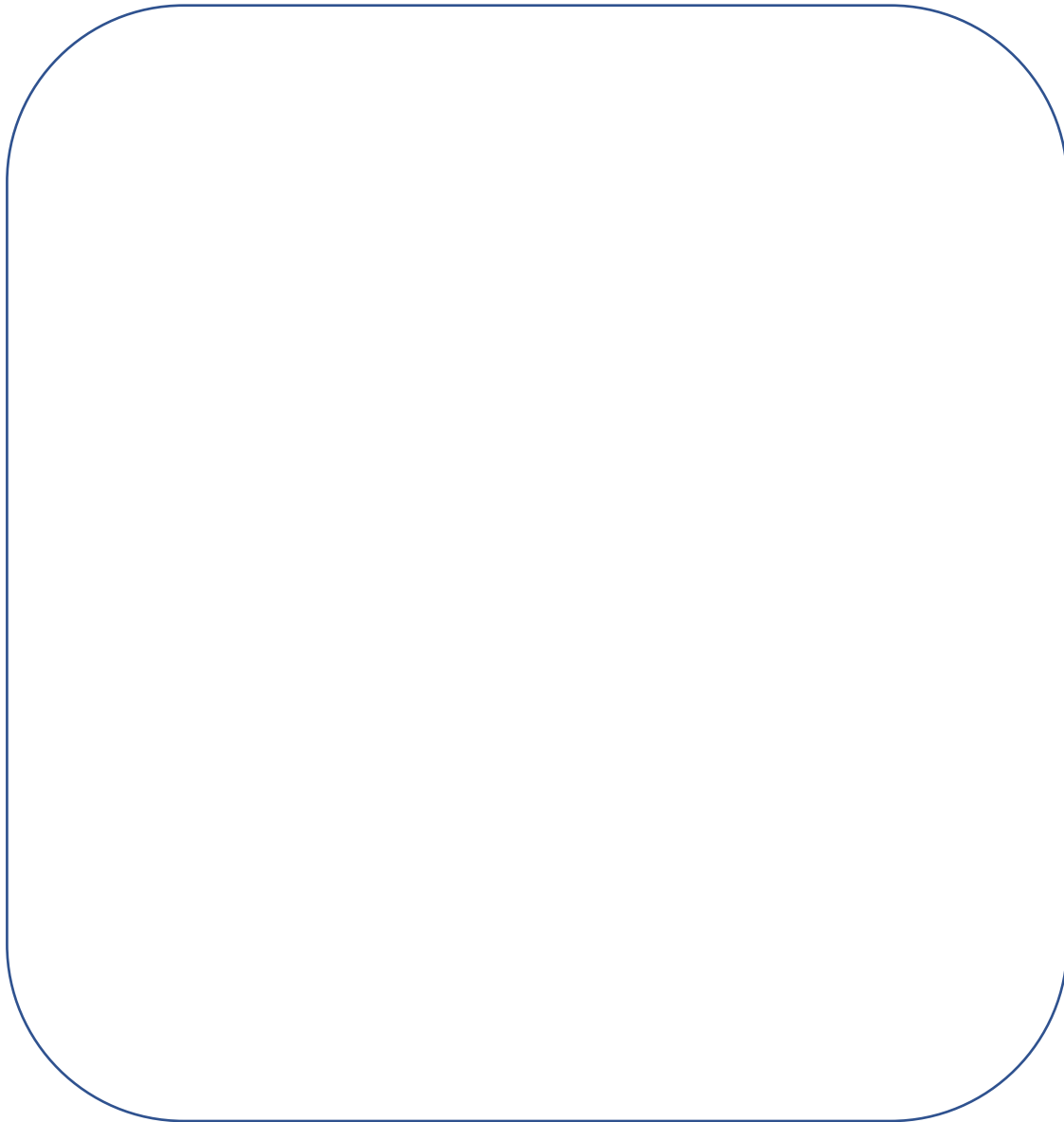
Now share with your partner

Briefly explain and listen to their responses, capture feedback. Don't try to defend your ideas – even if you think they are wonderful it's them you're trying to solve a problem for.

Capture any useful feedback here

Now sketch out your BIG idea…..

Based on the feedback, pick the one which seems most promising and elaborate your design. What has their feedback told you about what works for them – or what doesn't work? Can you amplify, add features? Can you streamline? Build on what you've learned about them. How might your solution fit in their lives and how might it make a difference?

….. and now build it!

Now try and create a prototype, something which brings your idea to life and with which they can interact. Try to go beyond a sketch and explanation, make it real for them. Use whatever you can find to build a way of explaining and sharing your idea in some physical form. It doesn't have to be perfect but it does have to communicate – make it something they can touch, feel, play with, react to…..

If your idea is a service (rather than something physical) then create a story around it so they can interact with it, imagining themselves in that story.

Don't defend your idea, observe, listen, watch – get new information about how they react, how they play, how they use the idea….

Now share it – and capture your learning

+ What worked...

− What could be improved...

? Questions...

! Ideas...

Show, tell and reflect

Welcome back to the world of innovation! What you've done (in a very fast timeframe) is begin the process of co-creating a solution to someone else's problem. You've got as far as a prototype and if we had more time you could build on that, refining it and repeating the sharing and exploration around it, getting closer all the time to something which your partner will value.

You've followed a simple process – and importantly, you could use this process to repeat the trick with a new challenge. And as entrepreneurs – change agents – that process can be a really powerful resource. If we know the steps we need to take to bring any idea to life and create value with it then we'll be well-armed to deal with any innovation challenge.

In outline the process – which is called Design Thinking - looks like this:

FRAME A QUESTION	GATHER INSPIRATION	GENERATE IDEAS	MAKE IDEAS TANGIBLE	TEST TO LEARN	SHARE THE STORY

And you can learn more about this powerful approach here.