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Human Centered Design Approach to Mentoring

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ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

A Human Centered Design Thinking Approach to Recruitment of Mentors for Foster Care Youth

Design Thinking is quickly changing from a model of designing products to becoming known for human centered design. This change has occurred with the work of companies like IDEO, who strive to bring about change to non-profits in socially innovative ways. With this knowledge, more people are utilizing Design Thinking in new and challenging ways. This project serves to use Design Thinking and human centered design to assist in the ongoing challenge of youth who age out of the foster care system by creating a lesson plan to teach foster care and adoption agencies effective ways to recruit mentors and to sustain mentor relationships with youth. With the help of mentoring relationships, these foster care youth may have a more positive experience in care, and may transition out of care with supportive role models.

Key words: Adolescence, Anthropological, Creativity, Teaching

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Jennifer L. Potratz

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Date

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

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A Project in
Creative Studies

by

Jennifer L. Potratz

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
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May, 2013

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J. Michael Fox, Project Adviser

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Jennifer Potratz, Candidate

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This project began almost a year ago during my work with the exploratory course, Creativity for a Cause. It is there that I was introduced to Design Thinking, and to the desperate need for change in the foster care system. I would like to thank Dr. Cabra for his creation of this course and his guidance along the way. Through this open door of exploration, I discovered life long friendships, rebuilt broken relationships with family members, and strengthened my relationship with myself.

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me to keep going throughout this project, and helped me to find what I believe is my

purpose in this life.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to develop a lesson plan for the recruitment of mentors for foster care youth using the Design Thinking model, which would be suitable for review through CDHS, the Center for Development of Human Services. Foster care youth throughout the country, and specifically within the state of New York, age out of the system lacking a strong adult presence in their life. Many foster care agencies utilize mentoring, but finding individuals willing to volunteer their time to help these youth is difficult. New and innovative techniques are needed to increase the number of adults recruited for mentoring youth in the foster care system.

Design Thinking has seen a great deal of growth recently, using human centered design to affect change in many other places outside of design technology. This lesson plan will serve as an extension of a previously developed social innovation prototype, and may be used as a template for further investigative approaches toward recruitment of mentors in the foster and adoptive care systems.

Since this is an area of new exploration, the guidelines of the lesson plan generated will be simple and free of unnecessary content, while still infusing the important aspects of Design Thinking into a desire to recruit viable mentors for youth in foster care.

Through my conversations with transitioned youth, and staff currently serving in foster care and adoption agencies, Design Thinking seems to be the appropriate fit for the necessary introduction of creativity into the foster care system.

Rationale for Selection

The inspiration for this project has come from many places, almost as if the powers that be placed the perfect stones in front of me for the creation of the path this project has taken me on. It begins with my own childhood, a daughter to an adult who grew up and aged out of the foster care system. Without too much detail, my father suffered at the hands of the state, and his fate was forever affected by the care he received growing up as a child in the foster care system. He aged out of the system, without family and without the proper guidance. This fact had a direct impact on the childhood I had as a child of an adult who grew up in the foster care system.

While my father's story is a sad one, I was also able to witness the amazing impact adoption can have on the life of a child who is left in the state's care. My two cousins, both adopted, were brought up in a home of educated, established and exceptionally creative parents, and received more care than most children ever will. Their lives have been set in motion, with love and support of their family, and the necessary guidance of role models, things my father never knew.

In the spring semester of 2012, I took an exploratory course entitled, Creativity for a Cause (Cabra, 2012). We were asked to pair up with a non-profit, and use the Design Thinking model to tackle a challenge of a social context. My group selected the challenging task of addressing the concern with youth who age out of the foster care system. It was here that I was introduced to Design Thinking for the first time, and saw how this model of creativity worked when applied in a social context. We were taught the importance of empathizing with our clients to

gain a better perspective on our challenge, and this immediately appealed to my background in behavior and psychology. My interest in incorporating this model into my previous experience became great, and I found that working with the Design Thinking model I was able to put to use my existing skill set when working within the social context of the foster care system.

Through that course, my group members and I developed a social solution prototype that addressed the need for stable adults in the lives of these foster care youth, as to help transition them out of care with a team of support. As the course drew to a close, I felt conflicted about our prototype, and had a desire to continue to explore this challenge further.

I began talking with various members of foster care and adoption organizations to inquire about their mentoring policies and programs, and started to research the importance of mentoring in the lives of foster care youth, especially as they transition out of care. It became evidently clear to me that creative techniques were needed to bring more positive role models into the lives of foster care youth through the role of mentoring, and that teaching Design Thinking to these organizations would allow them to infuse creativity into the culture of their mentoring programs.

<div align="center">*Project Contribution*</div>

It is my hope that through the development of this project I am able to bring needed change to the foster care system through the education of Design Thinking and it's flexibility of tools and ability to sustain innovative solutions. As I thought about ways I could impact the lives of foster care youth aging out of the system, I

knew something needed to be done to infuse positive role models into the lives of these youth. But each prototype I developed was challenged by the existing state regulations put in place, leaving me to feel defeated and unsure if the challenge I was trying to tackle was insurmountable. And then I was reminded of a Chinese proverb from my youth, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." In teaching these foster care organizations how to use Design Thinking to recruit mentors, I am teaching them skills and tools they can not only use for this challenge, but in challenges their organization may face in the future. And not only that, but Design Thinking and its principles will be introduced to the foster care youth through the active participation with the tools as well. Through this project, I hope to bring more caring individuals to the role of mentoring in a foster care youth's life, and to infuse Design Thinking and creativity into the lives of these youth and to the people that serve and support them.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

Design Thinking

Recently, with companies like IDEO and the D.School at Standford, Design Thinking has reached popularity as a tool for innovation. However, the concept of Design Thinking has been around for quite awhile with its start in creative problem solving and the field of design (Cahen, 2008).

History

Design Thinking comes from the roots of participatory design beginning during the design methods movement in the 1960s (Di Russo, 2012) Participatory

design was about integrating end-users into the development (prototyping) phase

of projects (Di Russo, 2012) But participatory design had many disadvantages,

mainly that it was not user-centered. This lead to the development of design that

was user-centered, and then even further to service design. Service design extended

the definition of user to include all stakeholders and individuals that were affected

or who interacted with the service system (Di Russo, 2012) From service design, we

moved even further during the 1980s to the mindset of human-centered design.

Here we began to see the process of design to include intuition and thought,

therefore creating the relationship between design and design thinking.

> "Design thinking is essentially a human-centered innovation process
> that emphasizes observation, collaboration, fast learning,
> visualization of ideas, rapid concept prototyping and concurrent
> business analysis, which ultimately influences innovation and
> business strategy. The objective is to involve consumers, designers,
> and businesspeople in an integrative process, which can be applied to
> product, service, or even business design. It is a tool to imagine future
> states and to bring products, services, and experiences to market. The
> term design thinking is generally referred to as applying a designer's
> sensibility and methods to problem solving, no matter what the
> problem is." (Lockwood, 2009)

Through the 1990's, Design Thinking became popular as it advocated for

having workplaces that were focused on the customer with an environment that

supported its employee's experimentation in order to sustain innovation (Reilly,

2011) A company that has become synonymous with Design Thinking is David

Kelley's brain child IDEO. IDEO started in 1991 as a merger of three companies and

soon brought together under one umbrella all services client companies needed to

design, develop, and manufacture new products (Thomke, S. & Nimgade, A., 2007)

Central to IDEO's design philosophy is the role of frequent and cost effective

prototyping. IDEO sought to generate as many ideas as possible early in the design

process through almost daily brainstorming sessions. (Thomke, S. & Nimgade, A.,

2007)

Process Stages

While Design Thinking may look like a linear process, as there are five steps

seemingly laid out in a line, the process is multidimensional. David Kelley,

founder of IDEO, defines the process as follows:

> "What we do is put out a design framework as our potential process
> then we expect people to modify it to meet their own needs. So it'd be
> foolish for me to say, This is the process. Do this step, do this step, do
> this step. One size doesn't fit all but it is a recipe to learn. You add your
> own fertilizer and water and soil and you make your own process out
> of it." (Solomon, September 2012)

While the number of steps and names of each step have changed over time, the most

current steps being used by IDEO are Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test

(D.School Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010).

There are several key components of Design Thinking that seem to be

common. The first is to develop a deep understanding of the consumer based on

fieldwork research (Lockwood, 2009). This encompasses the Empathize stage of the

process, where you are to reach consumer insights and discover unarticulated user

needs (Lockwood, 2009). Often this involves observational research and

ethnographic methods, by watching, listening, discussing and seeking to understand

(Lockwood, 2009).

A second important aspect of Design Thinking is the involvement of the user

through collaboration between the user and multidisciplinary teams. This helps to

move you toward radical innovation and is the stage in process where you begin to clearly define your challenge (Lockwood, 2009).

The third part is to accelerate your learning through visualizations, experimenting through hands-on learning, and the creation of quick and inexpensive prototypes. The begins the Ideate phase of the process and the ideas generated through this stage will be selected to move on to the prototyping stage. The fourth part of the process is the prototyping stage. Prototypes can be sketches of concepts, physical mockups, stories, role-playing or story-boards, and any other type of design inbetween (Lockwood, 2009, D.School Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010). The objective is to make the intangible, tangible. The power of visual communication is undeniable (Lockwood, 2009).

The final aspect of the process is the testing phase, where the key is to enable integrative thinking by combining the creative ideas with more traditional strategic aspects in order to learn from a more complete and diverse point of view (Lockwood, 2009).

For a deeper explanation of each of the stages, as well as a variety of tools that would be most useful in the recruitment of mentors to the foster care system, please see Appendix A: Lesson Plan.

Design Thinking for Social Good

An important component to Human Centered Design Thinking is the anthropological fieldwork done at the Empathize stage of the process. In an interview with IDEO's founder David Kelley, Kelley talks about *Needfinding*, an idea and empathizing tool presented by the D.School at Standford. "I had always learned

about problem solving but Standford taught me in that it was just important to
worry about figuring out the kind of human needs that were worth working on and
then doing the problem-solving. It just seemed to be much more interesting when
you got to figure out what was the real problem you were working on" (Solomon,
September 2012). Needfinding then becomes a way of really locking into the critical
problems, because there are just so many to solve. You do this by determining what
humans really value. By building empathy for people, you start to have insights
about them (Solomon, September 2012).

IDEO has given way to many new developments in recent years to work with
a more focused Human Design Centered approach, tackling "wicked" problems in
the non-profit world. The focus is on understanding the customer, and the design
begins with its user. A new approach to the previous Design Thinking stages has
been adapted for Human Centered Design through IDEO and incorporates new tools
that may be used for the more "wicked" problems facing third world countries. The
three stages included in this model are Hear, Create and Deliver. While this model is
in its developing stages, from my perspective, the steps are clearly defined, and the
tools introduced in the toolkit may be adapted to work with non-profits, in
particular the foster care system. For more information on this toolkit, visit
https://hcd-
connectproduction.s3.amazonaws.com/toolkit/en/download/ideo_hcd_toolkit_final
_cc_superlr.pdf

Lesson Plan

Statistics of Foster Care

There are approximately 463, 000 children in the U.S. foster care system,

with 29,000 of these youth being emancipated from the system, and another 9,700

being classified as runaways (Diehl, D.C., Howse, R.B., & Trivette, C.M., 2011).

Most kids at 18 have community and family support they take for granted.

They have a relative who can lend them money or give them a place to live. They

have a parent who can cover them on health and car insurance policies or co-sign

loans. They may have teachers or friends who offer guidance and emotional support.

Many foster care youth lack these supports and relationships (Ferrell, 2004).

Without these basic community and family supports, these youth face issues with

drugs, teen pregnancy, homelessness, incarceration and worse.

With a system that seems set up to fail it's youth, it is essential that these

youth build the necessary skills for aging out of care. For those youth who will not

be adopted or who do not wish to be adopted, mentoring relationships with adults

may represent a source of support and stability that could prevent negative

outcomes associated with aging out of the foster care system (Diehl, D.C., Howse,

R.B., Trivette, C.M., 2011).

Importance of Mentoring

> "Mentoring programs are a potentially useful prevention strategy
> with these youth. The use of mentoring programs to improve
> outcomes for at-risk youth has grown steadily in recent years. This
> renewed interest in mentoring is partly fuelled by research on the
> process of resilience. Resilience research has consistently identified
> the presence of a supportive and caring non-parental adult in the lives
> of children and youth who succeed despite adversity and hardship."
> (Osterling, K.L. & Hines, A.M., 2006)

Recent studies have examined the structure and quality of supportive relationships for youth in foster care. For example, one study of 959 assigned mentoring pairs in the Big Brothers Big Sisters impact study found that youths in mentoring matches that lasted over one year had better outcomes than those youths in matches that lasted less than one year (Munson, M.R., & McMillen, J.C., 2008). Youth who engaged in a mentoring relationship for one year were less likely to engage in destructive behaviors (i.e., use drugs or alcohol, get into fights, or skip school), more confident in school, and had better family relationships (Johnson, S.B., Pryce, J.M., &Martinovich, Z., 2011).

The transition to adulthood is a developmental period of heightened stress and uncertainty, including critical decision making about social roles with respect to relationships and career. This is especially difficult for those youth in foster care because of the histories that commonly include traumatic events, such as the events that lead to the need for foster care (i.e., death of a parent, abuse, and/or neglect), the emotional upheaval of removal from their home, and injuries endured while in the child welfare system (Munson, M.R. & McMillen, J.C., 2008).

Mentoring relationships are essential in addressing youth's emotional issues that may be interfering with the acquisition of concrete life skills. Strong mentoring relationships have been identified as critical to the success of youth who have encountered difficult life circumstances (Diehl, D.C., Howse, R.B., Trivette, C.M., 2011)

With strong mentoring relationships established while still in care, youth will have the opportunity to learn essential skills, and to age out of the foster care system with the necessary supports to be successful. As one youth in care put it, "When I turn 21, I will age out of the system, but there is no way I will age out of the relationships that I have built through Ward Home. You don't age out of the love that they have shared with you." (O'Neill, B., 2010)

Need for a Creative Approach

While no research has been done to the effects of using Design Thinking within the Foster Care system, or none that I could find, there is something to say about the need for creativity in the lives of youth in care.

When I talked with my contacts in various organizations involved in the foster care system about creativity, they spoke of things like art and music education. I explained that while this type of education is essential, it is also essential that these youth be taught the importance of creative thinking and creative problem solving. So much of what youth in foster care experience is an act of survival, and those skills like creative problem solving go under developed, but are so important to their potential as functioning adults.

While I was not able to talk with youth in care directly, the message that I got from former youth in care was that their creativity was not developed. When I spoke with my own father about creative problem solving skills, he stared at me wide eyed, as if the concepts I introduced were completely foreign to him.

In pursuit of drawing a relationship between creativity and the foster care system, I stumbled upon two TED talks where the individual's spoke to the importance that creativity had in their lives as youth in care, and one in particular, to the great importance that mentors took in the course of her life and creative journey.

Lemn Sissay, an award-winning playwright and popular broadcaster in the UK, as well as an author of five books of poetry, speaks about his experience growing up in the foster care system in the UK, and how his creativity saved him. "In creativity I saw light. In the imagination I saw the endless possibility of life, the endless truth, the permanent creation of reality, the place where anger was an expression in the search for love. A place where dysfunction is a true reaction to untruth" (Sissay, 2012).

Victoria Rowell, an emmy award winning actress, and ballet dancer, who grew up in foster care and experienced the love and support of many mentors throughout her life, speaks to the importance of paying forward this type of generosity. "Creativity for me is not just as I say in the act of dance and ballet, but in reciprocity and the creativity of passing it forward, for it is not for us to keep, that we are vessels that give it to the next" (Rowell, 2011).

In examining the experience of these adults, many years outside of the confines of the foster care system, it rings true that not much has changed in a system devoted to helping its nation's children. Like any other "wicked" problem approached by Design Thinking, the concerns that face the youth in foster care are

in desperate need of a creative approach and it is my hope with this lesson plan, that

a small flame of creativity will be lit.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

When examining how to define the route I would take through my

construction of this lesson plan, I knew that it would be most logical to implore the

Design Thinking techniques to my own creative process through this project. But as

I remembered from my work within the Foster Care system previously, due to

regulations and restrictions of access to youth, I was not able to collect data through

the empathizing stage directly through observing youth and mentor relationships.

Instead, I drew information from interviews with past foster care youth, such as my

father and one of his siblings, and also previous contact I'd had with former clients

in a mental health setting.

I also sought contact with women I had made connections with at CDHS, to

point me to other individuals at various foster care and adoption agencies, who

could speak to their youth's experiences with mentoring, and to what extent

mentoring was represented in their organization.

The following process plan is broken up by the five stages of the Design

Thinking model; empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test (D.School bootcamp

bootleg, 2010).

Empathize

At this beginning stage of the process and of this project, I sought to gather as

much information as possible on foster care, mentoring, and Design Thinking in a

social context. I researched the feelings youth in foster care have toward mentoring relationships, and how these relationships impact their greater success in life. I also conducted interviews with several women who worked for foster care and adoption organizations throughout Buffalo,NY and Rochester,NY to get a better understanding of their organization's mentoring program, and their mentoring recruitment process. I spent time talking with my father about his experiences as a youth in the foster care system, and the impact the lack of positive role modeling had on the course of his life. And because I was not able to talk to youth who are currently in care, I reviewed any available videos online that involved past and present youth speaking to their experiences as a youth in foster care.

Define

Prior to the information I had gathered during the empathize stage of the process, it was my goal to use the Design Thinking model to create a specific, targeted lesson plan for how to recruit mentors to foster care, that would encourage specific actions, and also account for state and county regulations. I sought to define a lesson plan for recruitment of mentors specific to state regulations, hoping this would be used through the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) training curriculum that the Center for Development of Human Services (CDHS) provided. However, as I conducted my interviews with various staff throughout organizations in both Monroe and Erie County, it became clear that the same rules did not apply across the counties. I became concerned that if I only used Design Thinking by way of my process in creating the lesson plan, I would create a lesson plan that would only function for a specific audience.

I realized that I must redefine my challenge so that the lesson plan I generated would be appropriate across all counties within the state. After speaking with an adoption organization, I learned that a single organization may contain youth from various counties, and that different rules apply to mentoring relationships across these different counties. A specific example I was given was that a smaller county will allow children's photos to be included in advertisements and marketing, while larger counties like Monroe and Erie county will only allow summaries of their children, limiting the techniques that may be used when recruiting mentor volunteers.

Ideate

At this stage, I went through the information I had previously gathered, feeling defeated, and concerned that it was impossible to address all regulations in the context of this project. I attempted to contact Monroe and Erie county officials in the hopes that I may be given the specific restrictions their county has in place for the foster care system. Unfortunately, these requests for information were never met, and I had to explore another approach.

My thoughts went to the possibility of using Design Thinking to address how the rules and regulations put in place to protect the youth in foster care made it nearly impossible to offer them the types of freedoms and necessary relationships they deserved.

And then a light bulb went off. I realized that instead of using Design Thinking in my approach to generating ideas for how to recruit mentors to foster care, instead I could teach the people who worked for these organizations Design

Thinking techniques so that they would be able to recruit mentors on their own, while considering their own state and counties regulations. Instead of working with only CDHS and MAPP to develop this lesson plan, that may or may not work with the county regulations, I could give these organizations the tools they needed to build a mentoring program for their organization that met their own needs and the needs of the various counties they worked under.

Prototype

Through this stage, I developed the lesson plan for recruitment of mentors to foster care. I utilized the Design Thinking stages in their simplest form, and provided the user with information on existing mentor relationships and recruitment techniques, while also teaching the user about various tools that would be useful during the Design Thinking process as it applied to recruiting mentors for foster care.

Test

It was my hope through this project, to have developed variations of the lesson plan that may be tested by participating organizations in their mentor recruitment efforts. However, lack of time and planning restricted this aspect of the Design Thinking process. It is my goal and hope after the completion of this project, to begin testing this lesson plan with my existing contacts at various foster care and adoption organizations.

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Purpose of Lesson Plan

At the start of this journey, my purpose for this lesson plan was merely to bring more positive individuals into the lives of the youth in foster care, so as to establish necessary relationships that they could carry with them as they transitioned out of care. As the project unfolded, I realized that not only was it important to infuse this change in the lives of the youth in foster care, but a change must also be brought to the system as a whole. By introducing the organization to Design Thinking, I was teaching design and innovation techniques that they could incorporate into the culture and climate of their organization. You can see that the lesson plan in Appendix A clearly outlines the stages of the Design Thinking process, and then gives several examples of challenges and how they would be met at each stage. The framework is laid out so that the teaching of Design Thinking and the examples given can be universal across all types of foster care organizations.

And not only this, but by using these techniques and tools to recruit mentors, they would be asked to observe the youth, and gain a better understanding of the lives of the youth they served. Additionally, I would also be bringing these techniques to the youth, with the hope that they may incorporate Design Thinking and creativity into their own lives.

Identifying Key Stakeholders

The development of this lesson plan involved the consideration of many key stakeholders. In its early stages of development, I considered the role of the state and county legislatures and lawmakers, and their impact on the regulations that

governed the foster care system. I was limited through much of the Design Thinking

process due to these regulations and my inability to effectively empathize with my

target audience in the way that was most appropriate for the guidelines of Design

Thinking. It became clear to me that in order to accurately consider the impact of

these regulations on the use of my lesson plan, I would need to relinquish the power

of application to the staff working in the foster care and adoption organizations. By

teaching them the Design Thinking process, they as the individuals with more power

and leverage within the system, could use the process and its tools to its fullest

potential within the structure of the lesson plan.

Therefore, another important key stakeholder was the staff involved in these

foster care organizations. They would be the ones I would need to get buy in from,

and who would carry on the Design Thinking torch to teach its techniques and tools

to the mentors as they went about successfully matching them with the youth in

foster care. These staff would also be involved in the infusing of creativity within

non-profit organizations in the foster care system, something untouched prior to

this project. Their importance in this project was exponential, as without their

support of Design Thinking and of this lesson plan for mentor recruitment, the

lesson plan would see no movement. You can see this illustrated specifically in the

lesson plan in Appendix A, as the challenge example speaks directly to one that

many mentoring programs must face.

And finally, the target audience of the lesson plan, the mentors and foster

care youth, comprise an essential piece of the stakeholder analysis. They will be the

ones who allow their lives to be observed and examined, who will actively

participate in the process along with the staff, and whose lives with be affected most greatly by the creation of this lesson plan. In selecting the specific tools to be used to recruit mentors and to build relationships with mentees, I selected those that really spoke to the need for building empathy. Examples of these can be found in Appendix A, page 20.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

Was Design Thinking the Best Choice?

While I did include a few aspects of the Creative Problem Solving process in my lesson plan, ie. Divergent and convergent thinking (Miller, Vehar, Firestien, Thurber & Nielsen, 2011), Brainstorming (Puccio, 2011) and PPCo (Puccio, 2011), the bulk of the concepts were derived from Design Thinking techniques and tools. I have spent the majority of my masters program educating myself on the techniques and tools involved in the Creative Problem Solving process. While this process, with all its endless possibilities, is great for consulting work and idea generation, it does not lend itself as easily in a social context.

So much of what Design Thinking encourages, is an empathetic understanding of its target audience to gain a clear point of view, so that the ideas generated accurately reflect viable solutions to this overreaching challenge or goal. This process is necessary when attempting to find solutions to the most challenging of problems. I would argue that while you could use Creative Problem Solving to tackle the challenge of recruiting mentors to foster care, Design Thinking speaks

more to the need for empathy in understanding the needs of possible mentors and

the youth in foster care.

What Went Well

Overall, I am pleased with the lesson plan prototype that I created through

the process of this project. The lesson plan itself is clearly laid out, and incorporates

those essential pieces of the Design Thinking process that would be most effectively

taught to my target audience.

I also spent a great deal of time exploring and ideating on all existing types of

mentoring relationships and recruitment techniques to provide the lesson plan with

a rich background and framework.

What I Would do Differently

In my own naivety, I did not account for the vast challenges I would face as I

attempted to complete this project. Due to restrictions of time and regulations of the

foster care system, I was limited in my presentation and application of the Design

Thinking model. Having this to do over again, I would spend further time exploring

the empathize stage of the Design Thinking model, and acting even more so as an

anthropologist in my exploration of the challenges facing foster care youth today.

I may also incorporate more tools from the CPS model, or investigate other

avenues of innovation and problem solving that may be useful in trying to conceive

a plan to recruit mentors to foster care.

In planning my time better, I would have liked to create a space where this

lesson plan and the tools of Design Thinking could be discussed with various foster

care agencies. It is my goal to continue on with this project and to bring this

knowledge of Design Thinking to as many organizations as are interested.

CONCLUSION

When beginning my work on this project, it was my intention to build a

recruitment plan for mentors using the model of Design Thinking myself and to then

present this lesson plan to various organizations as a prototype for how they would

specifically generate more volunteers to their mentoring program. However, after

doing my research during the empathize stage of the process, it became clear to me

that this plan would not function this way. I would need to teach the system how to

work for itself, starting with the various organizations that make up the Foster Care

system.

While I am not fully satisfied with all that this project is, I believe it is a good

foundation for those that are not familiar with Design Thinking, especially those

working with Foster Care youth. I realize that it might not be up to me to stop the

youth aging out of the Foster Care system. The system has been failing at this crisis

since its creation, and it is naïve of me to think that one idea will change decades of

inadequacy. What I do trust, however, is in the power of creativity, and its

education. Bringing Design Thinking to the Foster Care system is a step in a much

needed direction.

Due to time constraints and the lack of previous research, I was unable to

draw further analysis from the Human Centered Design that is emerging from IDEO.

While this model is not explored here in this paper, it is my belief that it's

instruction would greatly benefit the work in the Foster Care system, given its

current work with non-profit organizations. Further research on how these tools

may be used in smaller non-profit work in the Foster Care system would be

benefical.

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Appendix A: Lesson Plan

A Design Thinking Approach
To Mentor Recruitment
In Foster Care

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A Creative Approach
To Elicit Results

2012

Jennifer Potratz

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Studies in Creativity
Buffalo State College

Table of Contents

Introduction

The essential piece to almost any mentoring program is an adequate supply of people willing to volunteer their time. In working with Foster Care Youth, this becomes particularly more challenging, as the regulations that protect these youth make the process for becoming a mentor strenuous and time intensive. There is also the added difficulty of having such a diverse population of youth, that matching mentors with mentees takes added care and thought.

Despite this challenge, mentor relationships for Foster Care Youth are of great benefit to their well-being and their growth into successful adults.

What becomes necessary for any mentoring program is the right skill set and tools to recruit viable mentors. This tool book introduces the Design Thinking model of creativity, and shows how its methods and tools may be used to foster creative approaches to mentor recruitment in the Foster Care system.

Who This Book Is For

This book has been created for Foster Care agencies with or without existing mentoring programs who are in need of techniques to utilize when recruiting new mentors. While this book is developed for Foster Care youth in particular, these techniques and tools can be utilized with other mentor programs as well.

The recruitment of volunteers, like many of the aspects of running a mentoring program, is impacted tremendously by local circumstances and resources and skills specific to the program. Because of these differences and the regulation differences specific to location, what may work for a program in one location, may be ineffective in another. Because of this, this book is designed to look at recruitment holistically and from a broad perspective. It attempts to examine elements affecting recruitment that may be overlooked.

Utilizing the Design Thinking model of creativity and incorporating the specific techniques of Human Centered Design, this book offers tools and techniques to assist any mentoring program in the development of a well-rounded mentor recruitment process plan.

This would be most useful to those individuals in a position of influence, such as program coordinators or directors of recruitment for mentoring programs. As you will see, an essential part of these techniques and tools, is that everyone involved in the mentoring program has an important role, and is an essential part of the process as will be discussed in this book.

PART 1 – DESIGN THINKING

Defining Design Thinking

IDEO, an engineering and design firm known for its innovation, first introduced Design Thinking in 2005 to engineer students at Standford University, with the belief that it is possible to train engineers and scientists to become innovators. (Meinel, 2010) Since its start, Design Thinking has been an essential innovation model in the world of business, and most recently within the scope of non-profits, both nationally and abroad. This model of creativity has shown great success in the improvement of producing innovative products, systems, and services, using a well defined and easily understood structure.

Design Thinking is a process for exploring and defining problems that are ill defined. It asks its user to acquire information about their target audience, begin to analyze and understand this information, come up with ideas as to how to solve an existing challenge, develop prototypes for solutions to the existing challenge and finally test these solutions on their target audience. The below figure illustrates the five stages of the Design Thinking process.
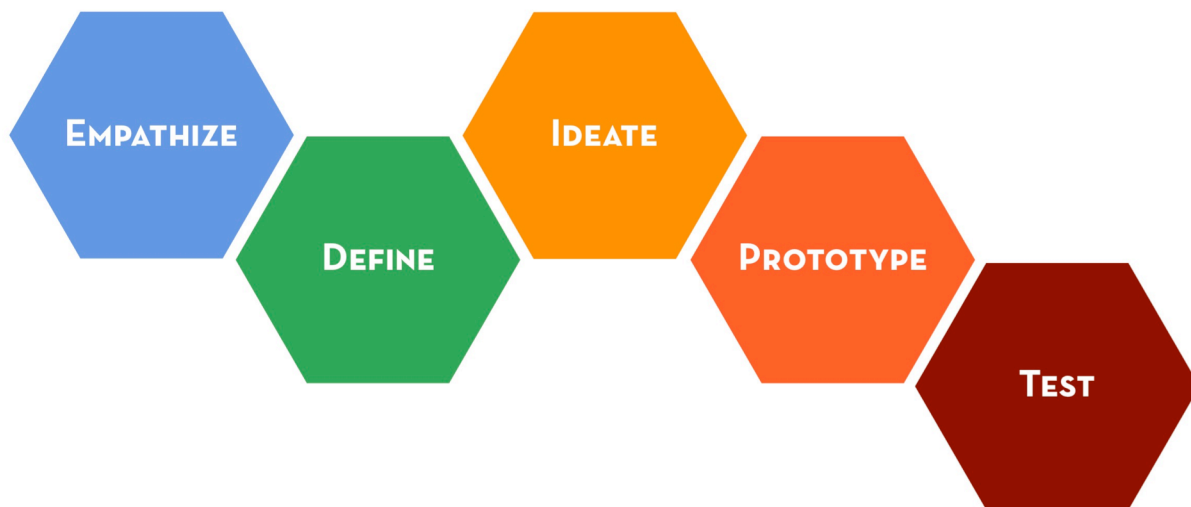

Figure 1. Design Thinking stages from (D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Divergent & Convergent Thinking

An essential aspect to all creative problem solving, and one that is particularly important throughout the Design Thinking process, is the concept of divergent and convergent thinking. These two thinking skills are requirements for the development of useful and innovative strategies used in Design Thinking. Below is a table that provides a definition for each as well as the rules that are involved in each thinking process.

	DEFINITION	RULES
DIVERGENT THINKING	Generating lots of options, making lists	• Defer Judgment- Whatever idea comes to mind, go with it. Don't evaluate ideas while generating them. The ideas can be evaluated later. • Strive for Quantity- The more ideas you have, the greater the chances of getting a good one. Lay out all the usual approaches to the problem, then push to consider new options. • Seek Wild and Unusual Ideas- Freewheel; the wilder the ideas the better. It's easier to tame a wild idea than to invigorate a weak one. Stretch your thinking to create some wild ideas. • Build on Other Ideas- Let one idea spur other ideas. Build, combine and improve ideas. • Wild Card Principle- Allow time for incubation.
CONVERGENT THINKIN	Judging options, focusing, making decisions	• Be Affirmative- Behind every creative act lies affirmative judgment. Even in convergence, it's important to discipline yourself to think "what's good about it?" before succumbing to the "now way!" reflex. Look for what you want, not just for what you don't want. • Be Deliberate- Avoid snap decisions or harsh judgments. Give every option a fair chance, and try to keep your own prejudices and assumptions in check. • Check your objectives- Remember your original goal. Watch out for "sparkling" ideas that don't go in the right direction. In the face of to many good options, let your original objective be your guide. • Improve ideas- Not all ideas are workable solutions. Even promising ideas must be honed and strengthened. Be disciplined. Take time to improve ideas. • Consider Novelty- Be brave. Don't dismiss original thinking out of hand. Consider ways to trim, tailor, or rework. • Wild Card Principle- Allow time for incubation.

Figure 2. adapted from (Miller, Vehar, Firestien, Thurber & Nielsen, 2011)
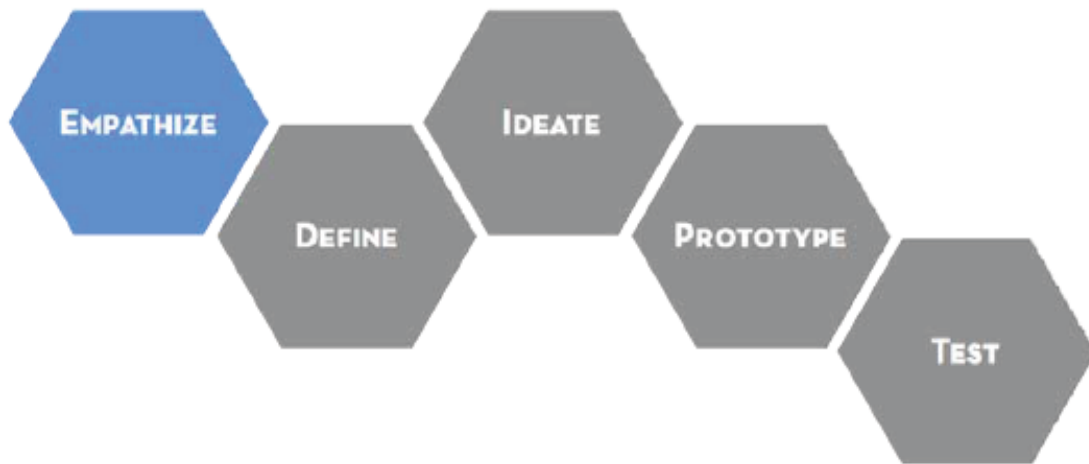
The Design Thinking Process

Figure 3. Design Thinking stages from (D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Stage One: **EMPATHIZE**

<u>WHAT is the Empathize stage</u>: This is the first stage in the design process and is where you are asked to observe, engage and immerse yourself. You begin by watching users as they go about their lives, view their behaviors, and the context in which these behaviors exist. You interact with your users, begin to interview them and through this process open yourself up to experiencing what your user experiences.

<u>WHY this is important</u>: In order to help your user from a human centered standpoint, you really need to understand who they are. By watching the people you are working with, you begin to develop insights that will eventually lead you to innovative solutions. When working directly with people, the way they think and the things they value are revealed, in ways that were not obvious before. This is called the empathize stage, as you begin to cultivate your empathy for this person's challenge, and in doing so, find you may see things about the person's challenge that even they did not know existed. If possible, in addition to observing and interviewing your users, it is important that you are able to have a personal experience within the design space. This can be done by finding or creating experiences that allow you to immerse yourself in your users life, to better understand your users situation, the situation in which you are designing for. This stage utilize the skill of divergent thinking, as you are encouraged to explore many ideas and situations, while keeping your mind open.

Please refer to Helpful Tools to find tools you may use during the Empathize stage.
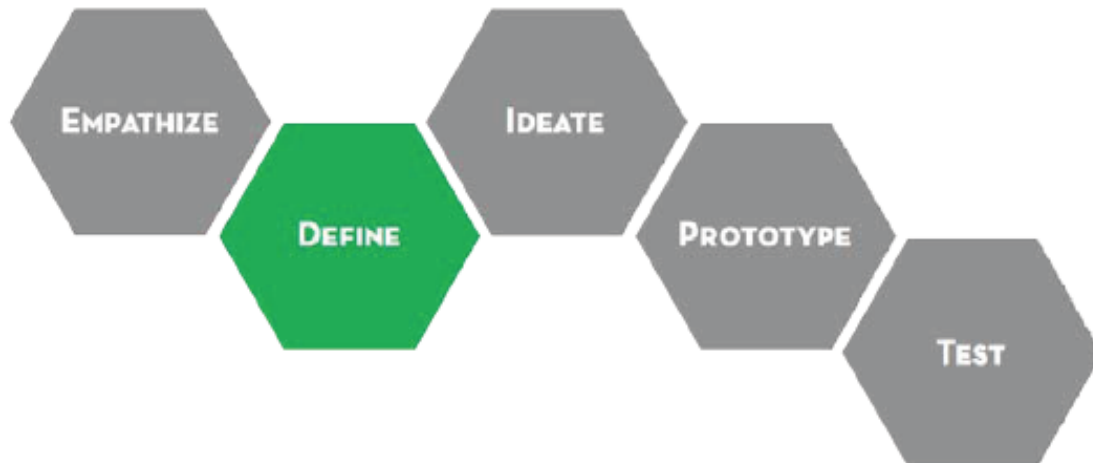
(D.School Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Figure 4. Design Thinking stages from (D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Stage Two: **DEFINE**

WHAT is the Define stage: In this stage, you begin to examine your findings from the empathize stage, and really start to formulate a meaningful challenge. You use the understandings you have of your client and your design space, and cultivate a problem statement, or what we can call your point of view. This challenge or problem statement should be refined enough that it focuses on specific users and the things you discovered during your empathize stage. This is not only a definition of the problem you are faced with, but is your point of view of the problem, based on what you discovered during the empathize stage.

WHY is this important: This stage is critical to the process of design as it really illustrates the problem that you're intending to address. Some key elements to a solid point of view is that the problem is well focused, it seeks to inspire your team of supporters, references are provided for other competing ideas, your team feels empowered to make decisions, "how might we" statements are used to invite brainstorming, it guides your innovation efforts and captures the hearts and minds of the people you have met through the design process. Remember to stay away from developing concepts that are all things to all people, as the challenge you decide on should be something you can revisit and reformulate as you learn by doing.

Begin with a specific and compelling challenge statement that may be used as a springboard for solution generation. This stage utilizes the skill of convergent thinking, as you are asked to review your experiences during the empathize stage, and begin to narrow your scope as you define your challenge.

Please refer to Helpful Tools to find tools you may use during the Define stage.
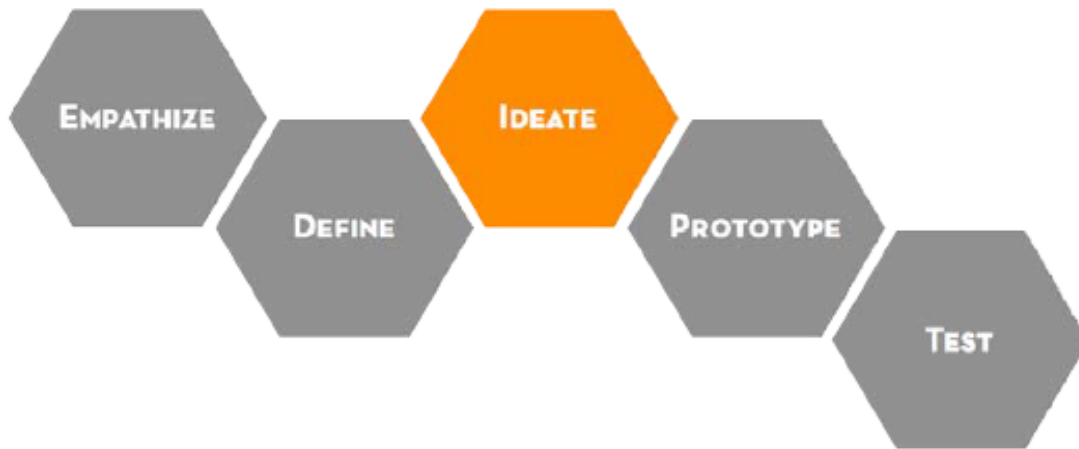
(D.School Bootcamp Bootlege, 2010)

Figure 5. Design Thinking stages from (D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Stage One: **IDEATE**

WHAT is the Ideate stage: In this stage, you begin your focus on the generation of ideas. The skill of divergent thinking is present throughout this stage, as this is a mode of flaring rather than focus. Your goal here is to allow yourself a wide space for your solutions so that a large quantity of ideas and diversity among ideas is possible. Once you have plethora of ideas, you can then begin building your prototype.

WHY is this important: Ideation is essential, as it assists you in transitioning from identifying your problems into exploring the solutions to these problems for your users. There are various forms of ideation that assist you in going beyond the obvious solutions to increase the potential of innovation, developing a perspective that strengthens your team, uncovering those areas of exploration that have yet to be discover, creating a high volume of ideas with a large variety so that options are innovative, and getting beyond the obvious solutions and driving past them.

Please refer to Helpful Tools to find tools you may use during the Ideate stage.
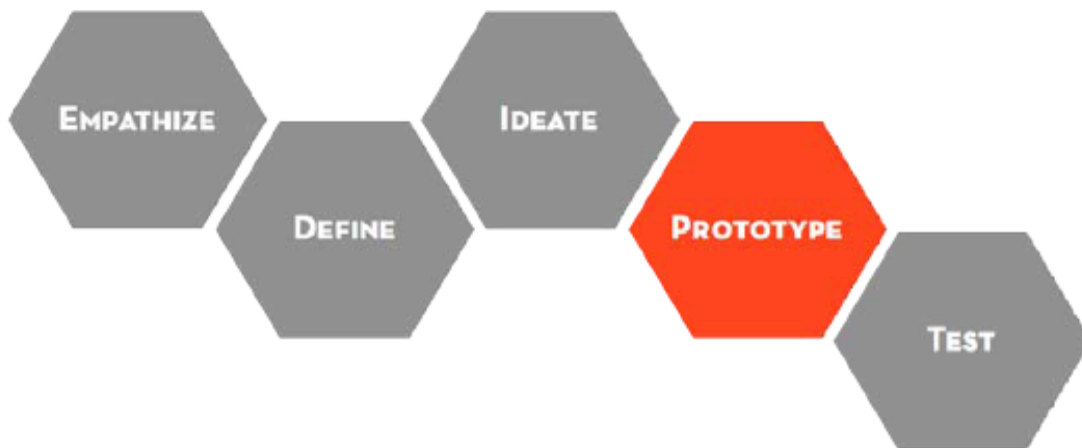
(D.School Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Figure 6. Design Thinking stages from (D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Stage One: **PROTOTYPE**

WHAT is the Prototype stage: In this stage, your ideas start to have legs as they leave your head and enter the physical world. When creating a prototype, it can be anything, as long as there is a physical product created. The prototype that you create should coincide with the challenge that you have and the progress you have made. Prototypes are meant to be rough in nature, as they are an exploration in the early stages of your idea solutions. Through interactions with your prototype you will better empathize with your users, so you are able to make continued improvements to your prototype.

WHY is this important: Prototyping is the way that you test the functionality of your design with your users. It helps you to gain empathy with your users, explore many solutions to options you have, it allows you to test many ideas through stages of prototypes and can also inspire others that you work with when you are able to show your vision in a physical context.

You prototype so that you can learn more, solve disagreements, start a conversation, fail quickly and cheaply, and manage the solution-building process. When prototyping, remember that your ideas should be rough in nature, as they are only in their beginning stages, and change to your initial prototype is expected as you begin to test it. It is through this stage of the process that you use convergent thinking to narrow down the ideas in order to make the most useful ideas into workable prototype solutions.

Please refer to Helpful Tools to find tools you may use during the Prototype stage.
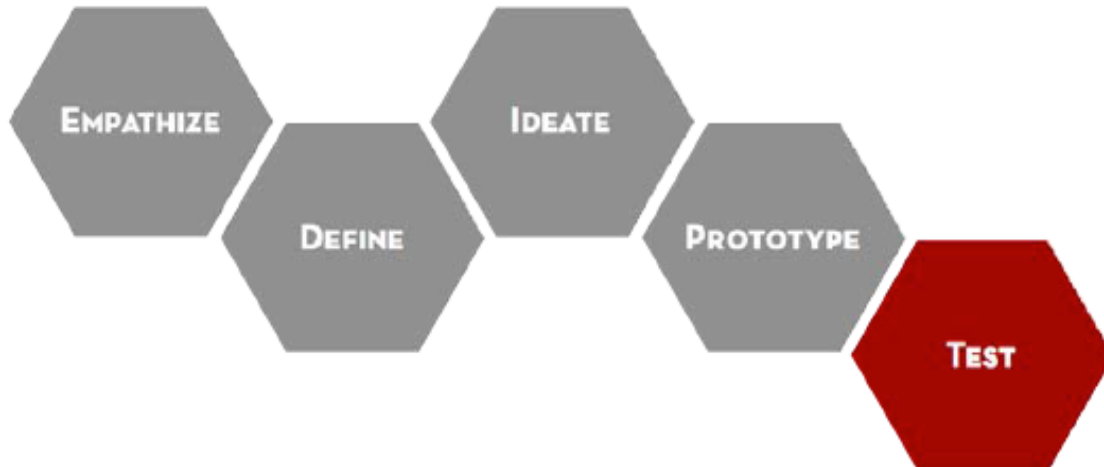
(D.School Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Figure 7. Design Thinking stages from (D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Stage One: **TEST**

WHAT is the Test stage: We've reached the final stage in the process. Here is the chance to refine your solutions and make them the best that they can be. Prototype as if you know you're right, but test as if you know you're wrong.

WHY is this important: You test your prototype for three reasons; to refine your prototypes and solutions, to learn more about your user and to test and refine your point of view. When you're refining your prototypes, this helps in the process of building the next iterations of the prototypes. In many cases this means having to go back to the drawing board. Through each stage of prototypes, you have another opportunity to build empathy through your observations and engagement with your users. This often yields unexpected insights. And in some cases, the testing of your prototype reveals that not only did you not get the solution right, but you also failed to frame the problem correctly.

Please refer to Helpful Tools to find tools you may use during the Test stage.

(D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

PART 2 - MENTORING

Importance of Mentoring

Some research has been done to explore the impact that mentoring relationships have on the outcome of youth in Foster Care. What is generally understood is that youth who have mentors during their transitional years in foster care, say that the experience was positive, and most often are more successful when aging out of the system.

"Constantly changing circumstances and lack of positive relationships with caring adults leads to feelings of abandonment and loss of control, as well as hostile acting out behavior. As a result foster kids are likely to have special physical and mental health needs." (Ferrell, 2004) "Researchers and policy-makers are increasingly concerned about older youth in the foster care system and negative consequences of youth aging out of the system without stable families or supports in their lives." (Diehl, Howse, Trivette, 2011)

"There are approximately 463,000 children in the U.S. foster care system, with about 177,000 of these being older than age 12; more than 29,000 youth were emancipated from the foster care system and an additional 9,700 were classified as runaways; and older youth in foster care are less likely to be adopted than younger children in the foster care system. Approximately 30,000 to 40,000 youth leave the foster care system each year with no permanent, stable family to support them as they negotiate the challenges of early adulthood." (Diehl, Howse, Trivette, 2011)

For those youth who will not be adopted or those that do not want to be adopted, having mentoring relationships with adults represents a source of support and stability that could help them to prevent the negative outcomes associated with aging out of the foster care system. (Diehl, Howse, Trivette, 2011)

The sensitive mentoring of a youth in foster care by caring and concerned adults; members of this youth's social network or volunteers, can foster the potential for these youth to build their self-esteem, strengthen their mental health and open themselves up to new social systems beyond the foster care system. (Diehl, Howse, Trivette, 2011)

"Studies have found varied positive effects of mentoring for youth in foster care, including emotional/psychological gains, overall more favorable health, fewer sexually transmitted infections, greater interest in education and activities that help in future careers and fewer problem behaviors. All this research supports the assertion that mentoring can be a positive influence on the development of many youth in foster care." (Diehl, Howse, Trivette, 2011)

The Five Types of Mentoring

The type of mentoring that a program offers affects the type of recruitment efforts of the program as well as the overall goals that the mentoring program wants to achieve. The activities between the five types of mentoring relationships will vary, so it is best to know which type(s) you are recruiting for, as the needs are different for each.

One-on-One Mentoring: This type of mentoring is the most traditional, and involves a relationship with one adult to one youth. It is usually a requirement that the mentor and the mentee meet at least four to eight hours a month for the course of a year. Research has shown that any less than a year and the mentor relationship does more harm than good, as the youth may view the end of this relationship as the abandonment of another adult from his/her life. It is important, that if possible, the duration of the relationship between mentor and mentee be explained to the mentee up front.

Group Mentoring: This type of mentoring involves one adult mentor working with a group of youth mentees, most often two to four youth. The mentor makes a commitment to meet regularly with the group of youth mentees over an extended period of time. Usually the meeting is guided by a structure that allows the youth time to share about themselves, while also included activities that are specified as appropriate. These activities can be both those that involve aspects of teaching as well as activities that are purely just for fun.

Team Mentoring: This type of mentoring involves a team of mentors working with a small group of youth, usually with a ratio of no more than one adult mentor to four youth. Meetings may be similar in structure to those found in group mentoring, and would involve the participation of all youth.

Peer Mentoring: This type of mentoring allows the youth to form a mentoring relationship with another younger peer. This could also be in the form of aged out foster youth working with those youth that are currently at the cusp of aging out, or those soon to be aging out working with youth that are transitioning into high school. It is usually the mentoring program that specifies the types of activities that are appropriate for this mentoring relationship. Usually these types of activities involve skill building or engaging in opportunities for personal growth, for both people involved. While the youth who are mentors serve as a positive role model for their younger peer, constant supervision and ongoing support is required. The level of commitment in a peer mentoring relationship is usually over the course of one school year.

E-Mentoring (Online Mentoring): This type of mentoring is the newest kind, involving the connection of one adult with one youth. The relationship between the two occurs via the Internet, with contact occurring usually once a week over the course of a year. In some situations, the mentor and mentee will meet face to face.

Why Targeted Mentoring Is So Important

A mentoring program needs volunteers in order to function. But a great mentoring program goes beyond just the recruitment of individuals, to the practice of targeted mentoring recruitment. This type of recruitment acknowledges that there must be a good fit between the youth and their mentor. This not only helps your mentoring program to be successful, but it also assures that the individuals that you recruit are ready for what's expected of them. Recruiting people who are most appropriate as mentors, gives you a head start at creating effective matches between mentors and mentees, and may also save your program time and resources by being intentional about who is getting recruited in the first place.

Factors To Consider When Choosing A Mentor

Gender: Research has show that mentors have a more successful relationship with their mentee when the youth is of the same gender. Even though there are many variations to gender roles and styles among men and women, it is widely understood that the majority of men tend to be more activity focused and goal oriented, while the majority of women tend to focus energy on interpersonal aspects of relationships and exploring their emotions. Male youth often benefit from the positive male role model that a male mentor can provide in their lives, while female youth may feel it is easier for them to build trust with their female mentor.

Race & Ethnicity: Matching youth and mentors by race can be somewhat controversial. The benefits to pairing youth with mentors of the same or similar ethnicity allows the building a relationship that is based on a mutual understanding. There may be similar cultural identities, life experiences, and languages. On the other hand, there can also be advantages to pairing youth with mentors who have different life experiences, allowing them to both grow from each other. Ultimately, however, what research has shown is that the personal qualities of the mentors are more important than the race and ethnicity that may be shared with the mentee. In circumstances where there may be a language barrier, it is important that mentors are paired with youth who speak their native language.

Age: In talking with various foster care agencies, and people working with mentors, it appears the two age groups that don't get enough recognition are the college students and those adults at the age of retirement. Those in college are close in age to the youth involved in the foster care system, and usually have more free time due to fewer life commitments. Also because of closeness in age, the youth and the college student mentors may share similar interests, and may better understand the experiences the youth are having, given that they had similar experiences only a few years prior. Adults at the age of retirement are usually still lead an active lifestyle and wish to serve their community. While they may not feel capable of taking on the commitment of fostering a child or youth, a mentoring relationship might be exactly what they desire. This relationship can be beneficial to the youth as the older adult acts as a strong role model, in similar ways that a parent would.

Socioeconomic Class: When recruiting volunteers, it's important to select mentors who may share similar life experiences. This allows for the building of rapport and strengthens the relationship. In situations where the socioeconomic backgrounds are dramatically different, it becomes difficult to establish rapport. However, at the same time, experience also shows that the higher socioeconomic status usually leads to greater volunteerism. In addition, people with greater economic and educational advantages have been found to be good mentors.

Recovering Addicts/Adults With A Criminal Record: While recruiting recovering addicts or adults with a criminal record may seem risky to some mentoring programs, these adults can actually provide realistic role models for foster care youth that are at-risk. These individuals can show troubled youth that despite struggles and adversity, they can change their life around for the better. This type of recruitment, however, requires many measures to ensure safety of the youth, so that they are not put in danger.

PART 3 – CREATING YOUR RECRUITMENT PLAN

Existing Recruitment Techniques

The following is a list of techniques for recruiting mentors both in the foster care system and beyond. While this is a pretty extensive list, it is not exhaustive. Studies have shown that individuals are more inclined to volunteer as mentors for a mentoring program that is well established and has a good reputation from a community of supporters. If your mentoring program is not well known, the following resources will help you build a name for yourself, while also helping you to recruit mentor volunteers.

Word-Of-Mouth: Word of mouth is the oldest way to recruit volunteers, as people are more likely to volunteer when they are asked by someone they know. Mentors can be recruited from family, friends and colleagues, or existing mentors can encourage their family and friends to volunteer as well. Additionally, because people often associate with people in similar social standing to themselves, word-of-mouth recruiting can be done strategically to ensure that your program reaches the specific demographic you are targeting.

The Mail: When using the mail, your program can create its own campaign to reach the types of people you wish to recruit. This can be done by mass mailing, both through regular and email. You may also wish to be included in mailing done by another business in order to reach people you may want to recruit. This will reduce your cost while also providing your program credibility and appeal.

The Internet: In this day and age, it is expected that every agency have a presence on the Internet. This can be done through the creation of your own website, the use of blogs, Facebook and Twitter. It is important to keep in mind the regulations set by your state and county regarding what is appropriate information to be shared through the Internet. This means that in almost all cases the use of photographs, names or identifying information about the youth you serve and your supporting staff, including existing mentors.

The Media: To generate support for your program and to recruit mentors, local print and electronic media can be used to draw attention. This can be done through the use of local newspapers, radio and news channels, in the hopes that they may feature your program and possibly become a sponsor, thereby recruiting mentors from their readers, listeners or viewers. It is important that you seek out individuals interested in human interest and first-person stories, so involving a mentor and mentee when talking with journalists may help to target the types of media outlets that reach the demographic you are trying to recruit.

Newsletters: Putting announcements or small articles about your program in the newsletters of other community organizations, faith organizations or other groups, can also be an inexpensive way to bring awareness to your program and thereby recruit mentors.

Community Events: If possible, sponsoring an event to kick off recruitment is a great way to bring in volunteers. Reach out to community leaders, other mentors and mentees to talk about their positive experiences with mentoring.

Local Leaders: Leaders of local government agencies, businesses, faith organizations, professional associations, business associations, fraternal organizations, and other groups can provide access to their organizations and their membership. Or they may want to be mentors themselves. You may want to meet with these leaders to educate them about your program as well as your need for mentors. If appropriate, you may bring along current mentors, mentees, or members of your organizations who could speak about the benefits of mentoring, not just for the mentees but also for the mentors and the whole community.

Community Organizations: Making presentations before community organizations can be an effective away of recruiting. You may want to bring mentors and mentees along to these types of meetings as well.

Marketing Materials: These can be in the form of posters, brochures, or flyers used in addition to other strategies listed. You may be able to display or distribute these materials in local businesses where you think people you would like to recruit may frequent.

Information Tables: Information tables are a great way to take advantage of events going on in your community. Your program can set up tables at events like fairs, festivals, sporting events, farmers' markets and also shopping centers, where people are likely to gather. You may wish to use small incentives such as pens, mugs or snacks with your name on them to attract attention to yourself. You may even find that local businesses will donate toward these items as an incentive for having their name associated with a good cause.

Adapted from (Garringer, M., 2006)

A Process Plan

Now that you have learned a fair amount about the Design Thinking process and discussed current mentoring initiatives, it seems appropriate that we should put the two together. Below is a simple example of how a group could target the recruitment of mentors for foster care youth using the Design Thinking model. Not only will Design Thinking provide a structure for your program to work through as they attempt to recruit mentors, but the process and tools that will be introduced in the final section of this tool kit can be applied to solve challenges that your program may encounter in all areas.

Before you begin at the first stage of the process, there are seven mindsets to keep you on the right track as you work through your challenge.

1. Show Don't Tell: Communicate your vision in an impactful and meaningful way by creating experiences, using illustrative visuals, and telling good stories.
2. Focus on Human Values: Empathy for the people you are designing for and feedback from these users is fundamental to good design.
3. Craft Clarity: Produce a coherent vision out of messy problems. Frame it in a way to inspire others and fuel ideation.
4. Embrace Experimentation: Prototyping is not simply a way to validate your idea; it is an integral part of your innovation process. We build to think and learn.
5. Be Mindful Of Process: Know where you are in the design process, what methods to use in that stage, and what your goals are.
6. Bias Toward Action: Design thinking is a misnomer; it is more about doing than thinking. Bias toward doing and making over thinking and meeting.
7. Radical Collaboration: Bring together innovators with varied backgrounds and viewpoints. Enable breakthrough insights and solutions to emerge from the diversity.

(D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Empathize: When recruiting mentors for foster care youth.

- At this stage in the process, your goals are to observe, engage and immerse yourself in the lives of not just the foster care youth, but also those individuals you wish to recruit as mentors.
- You may begin by observing the life of a youth you wish to match with a mentor and viewing his/her behavior in the context of his/her life. This allows you to better understand the youths interests, what struggles he/she may be going through, and hopefully what types of mentors may be most suitable.
- If you feel you already have a good understanding of the youth you're trying to match with a mentor, you may turn your focus to observing possible mentors, observing as much as you can about their behavior in the context of their lives.
- It is also important that you are interacting with the youth or possible mentors, not just observing. You may wish to interview both the youth and potential mentors as a means to draw connections.
- Most importantly, do your best to experience what the youth or potential mentors experience. This allows you to identify the right matches, and will guide your efforts of innovating.

Define: When recruiting mentors for foster care youth.

- At this stage in the process, your goal is to really synthesize what you learned during the empathy stage. Ideally, you will develop a point of view, or a problem statement.
- Since your challenge is to recruit mentors for foster care youth, your problem statement may be more specific to the type of mentors you wish to recruit, ie. Age, gender, socioeconomic status etc., or even more focused on a specific strategy you may wish to explore when recruiting. For example, if your program has never utilized marketing materials, or social media, your problem statement/point of view may be focused around this aspect of recruitment.
- Keep in mind that a good point of view is focused and adequately frames your problem. The goal of using Design Thinking is to explore innovative efforts that inspire your team, so these aspects should remain constant as you define your point of view.
- As was discussed earlier in this tool book, it is important that your problem/challenge statement encourages brainstorming, with the use of open-ended statements such as "How might we". An example challenge statement may then be, "How might we target college age mentors for at risk foster care youth?"

(D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Ideate: When recruiting mentors for foster care youth.

- At this stage in the process, your goal is to generate as many ideas as possible to solve your specific challenge related to the recruitment of mentors for foster care youth.
- As was discussed previously in this tool book, this is the stage in which you're asked go wide, or to use your divergent thinking skills. Really stretch yourself to think of ideas that have never been tried before, or to combine new ideas with other ideas that may seem unrelated.
- You are looking to step beyond the obvious solutions. So if we use our example challenge statement from before, ie. "How might we target college age mentors for at risk foster care youth", a simple solution may be to post fliers on the bulletin boards at local colleges. If we take this further, we may challenge ourselves to speak with a social work class, bringing in an existing mentor and mentee to talk about their success with mentoring.
- The most important aspect of the ideate stage, is to be cognizant of when you are generating ideas and when you are evaluating them. This is again the comparison of divergent and convergent thinking skills. It is important to remember that ideas should only be evaluated after the process of generation is complete, so as not to diminish the number and value of the ideas as they are generated.

Prototype: When recruiting mentors for foster care youth.

- At this stage in the process, your goal is to take the ideas you generated, pull them from your head, and bring them into the physical world through the creation of a physical prototype.
- A prototype, as it is understood in Design Thinking, is anything that will accurately convey your ideas and put them into action. So if we are working from our previous example, where we have decided to target college age mentors by speaking with a social work class, we now need to represent the process we will take to accomplish this.
- An example that could be used is a role-playing activity. Here your staff may act out the process, showcasing how the mentor and mentee may speak about their experiences to the social work class. You may have different staff members play students in the class, having them ask your pretend mentor and mentee questions about your program and about mentoring.
- There are many ways to prototype, and some examples will be shared in the next section, Helpful Tools.
- Remember, it is best if you develop many prototypes, making sure that each is only a rough representation, as these will most likely change as they are tested and retested.
- During the prototyping stage, remember to fail early and as cheaply as possible. These are only rough ideas.

(D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Test: When recruiting mentors for foster care youth.

- At this final stage in the process, your goal is to begin testing your prototype(s).
- Continue to refine your prototypes through the process, addressing any concerns that may arise. If you were working with the previous example of using a role-playing exercise to illustrate going into a social work classroom to recruit mentors using an existing mentor and mentee, you want to really show case the types of reactions that may occur in this situation. You may find that concerns arise with the age of the students, or that issues of confidentiality are not address. Here is where you may need redesign your prototype, and begin testing again.
- Remember your overall goal is to learn more about the individuals you are recruiting and the foster care youth you serve.
- If through the process of testing your prototypes, you reveal that you not only did not get the solution right, but in fact you had not framed your problem correctly, this is perfectly fine, and only shows to illustrate just how important each step of the Design Thinking process is.

(D.school Bootcamp Bootleg, 2010)

Helpful Tools

The following list of tools is a suggestion of methods from Design Thinking and Creative Problem Solving Techniques, meant as a framework to assist you during the Design Thinking process. This is in no way an exhaustive list, and is meant only as a jumping off point. You will be introduced to ten tools, but there are many other useful techniques that cannot be covered here. Please refer to the further reading and resources section that follows at the end of this toolkit for more information on Design Thinking and helpful tools.

Remember these are only suggestive techniques, and in the spirit of Design Thinking and Creative Problem Solving, you are encouraged to stretch and use these tools as they best suit you. You are also encouraged to keep these tools in mind when fostering relationships between foster care youth and mentors after a connection has been made. These tools are effective for a vast majority of tasks, and can even be used for future challenges that your organization may encounter.

A Day In The Life

To use this tool, you are asking your user, which could be both your foster care youth and potential mentor, to catalog the activities and contexts that they experience throughout their day. You may ask them to keep a journal, or if possible, record their experiences on a camera, but the essence of this tool, is the details that are being revealed. The youth may show you the challenges they face daily, through the details they play out in this journal, making it easier to understand what type of mentor would be most beneficial to them. This tool is useful for better understanding those pieces of the youths life that even he or she may not be aware of, so that a perfect mentor can be found.

Empathy Tools

To use this tool, you are using adaptive tools so that you yourself may experience processes as someone with different abilities from your own may. Imagine you are an adult mentor or foster care youth who has a physical disability or impairment. How would this impact you? You may want to wear clouded glasses or blindfolds, tape your fingers together, or practice getting around in a wheelchair. This is a great way to empathize with those youth or mentors who may need special care when being partnered together, and may also help you to better understand what their needs are for activities later during the mentor relationship.

(IDEO Method Cards: 51 Ways to Inspire Design, 2003)

Fly On The Wall

To use this tool, you will want to observe and record behavior within its context, but without any interference in the people's activities. You may wish to observe the foster care youth at home or school to see behaviors and personality traits that are useful for targeting. You may also want to use this to recruit mentors by sitting and observing adults in highly populated areas, to see what things draw their attention, so you are better able to focus your marketing material. This may even lead you to draw new relationships and connections for your mentoring program.

Collage

To use this tool, you will begin to dig deeper. Here you will ask your participant, most likely the foster care youth, to create and build a collage from photos or items that you provide. You will then talk with youth about the significance of the items and their placement on their collage. This helps the youth to illustrate understanding of issues they may be facing, and may also assist them in verbalizing complex or unimagined themes in their life. This tool may be useful to get deeper at who your youth is, and may also be used to draw relationships between youth and their mentor.

(IDEO Method Cards: 51 Ways to Inspire Design, 2003)

Draw The Experience

To use this tool, you may ask your youth to visualize an experience through drawings or diagrams. They may even wish to create a storyboard if appropriate. Here you are able to get past your own assumptions and preconceived notions about the youths experiences, in order to better understand he or she's challenges and interests. This tool is useful for digging deeper to define the types of attribute and challenges that are specific to the youth, so that he or she may be paried with the appropriate mentor. This is also a tool that would be useful as an exercise with the youth and their mentor.

(IDEO Method Cards: 51 Ways to Inspire Design, 2003)

Brainstorming

To use this tool, you must first remember the key rules of divergent and convergent thinking that were introduced at the beginning of this tool kit. You will wish to gather a group of staff, usually no more than 10, and ask one person to facilitate the meeting. Participants will record their ideas for mentor recruitment on post its, say them aloud, and the facilitator will place them on sheets of flip chart paper. All idea are welcome, and at the end of the process, you may review the ideas as a group, and select those ideas that are a good mix of novel and attainable.

(Creative Leadership: Skills That Drive Change, 2011)

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

To use this tool, you will review the differences between the culture that exists in your organization, and that of other organizations in different locations or cultural groups. You may wish to draw connections with mentoring agencies in other areas of the united states, or even other countries, to see what techniques they use as they are recruiting for mentors. This helps you to understand not only the various cultural factors and their impact on the youth and your work, but it may enlighten you to projects or other areas of growth within your own organization and your mentoring program.

Mind Mapping/Process Mapping
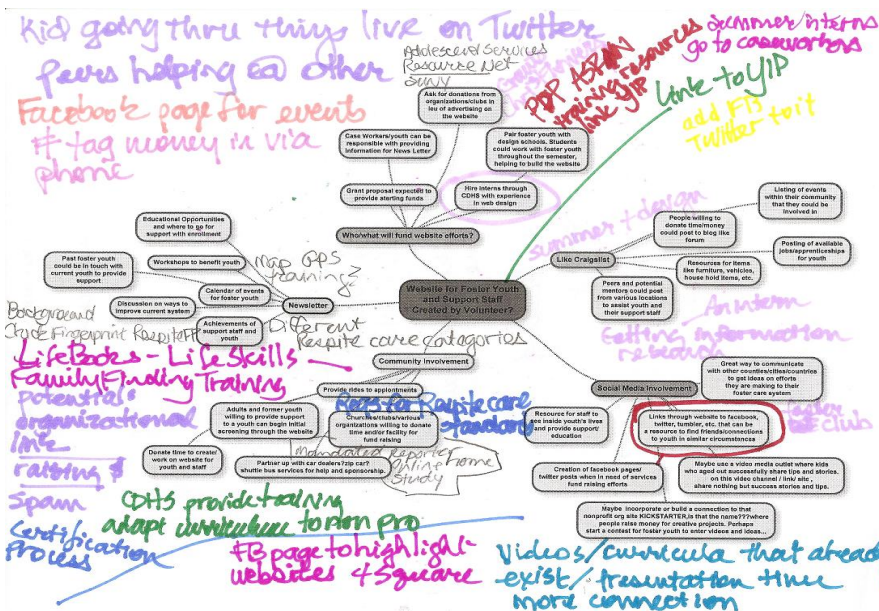
To use this tool, you drawing relationships between ideas. This may be in the form of a mind map, which has a center with points that move off from it, or in the way of a process map, where the ideas flow from one step to the next. This is useful in not just the generating of ideas, but also the stretching and elaborating of existing ideas. You may wish to work with one of the suggestions you came up with for increasing mentor recruitment, and begin to branch other ideas off of this, or you may wish to draw out the process of how you would go about achieving this idea. This is a useful tool for generating prototypes.

(IDEO Method Cards: 51 Ways to Inspire Design, 2003)

Role Playing

To use this tool, your staff may wish to explore different roles throughout the process of mentor recruitment, or this may be an effective way to act out the prototypes that you have developed. You may begin to act out activities in a real or imagined context, and see if there are any concerns that arise. This exercise may also trigger empathy from participants for the youth or mentors, leading to the raising of other relevant concerns or issues that need to be addressed.

(IDEO Method Cards: 51 Ways to Inspire Design, 2003)

PPCo
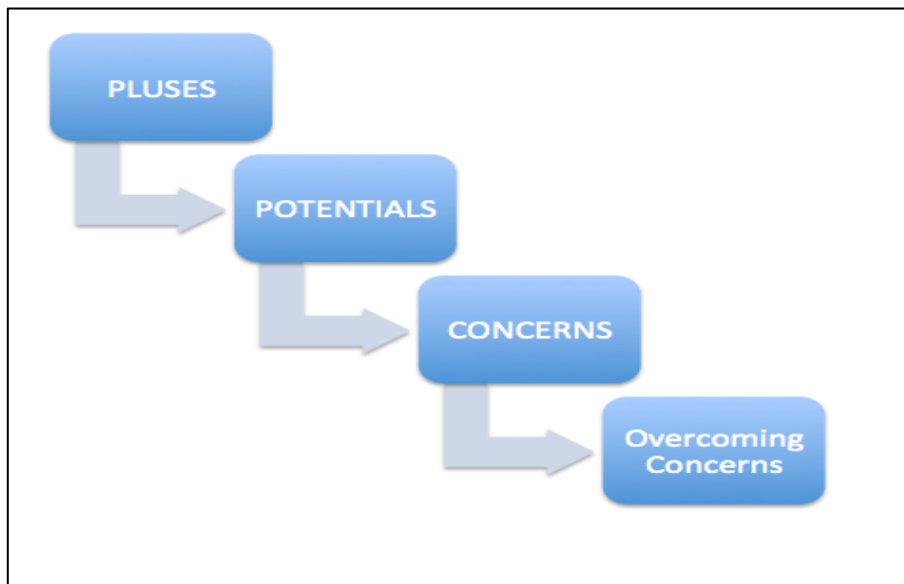
To use this tool, you are examining the pluses, potentials and concerns of your ideas, and then generating ideas on how to overcome your biggest concerns. This is useful as you begin to test your prototypes. You may wish to examine each of your prototypes using a PPCo, to evaluate any of their limitations. You may also use this tool with the mentors you are trying to recruit, asking them these questions in relationship to why they are interested in participating in a mentoring relationship with a foster care youth.

(Creative Leadership: Skills That Drive Change, 2011)

Further Reading

A free and simplified version of the techniques used in the Design Thinking process, and the model that was extensively used for this toolkit. You will find further explanation of the stages, and a variety of other tools that may be used.

http://dschool.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/BootcampBootleg2010v2SLIM.pdf

A deck of 51 tool cards useful for the empathy stage of the Design Thinking process, which includes several of the tools included in this tool kit. You may purchase a physical copy of the tools, or there is an application available for iphone and ipad users for purchase as well. A free version of the application is also available, but only comes with 8 of the 51 tools.

http://www.ideo.com/work/method-cards/

A free and much more extensive approach to Human Centered Design. This free tool kit uses the principles of Design Thinking and adapts them to worldwide problems. While the tool kit is focused around problems of a larger scale like hunger, running water, and economic constraints, there are methods and tools that would be helpful when applied through the scope of a non-profit lens.

https://hcd-connect-production.s3.amazonaws.com/toolkit/en/download/ideo_hcd_toolkit_final_cc_superlr.pdf

A beginner's look at the techniques and tools involved in the Creative Problem Solving process. Written by faculty at the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College and published at their own ICSC press, this graphic text provides another look at creative techniques that may be applied to solving challenges.

http://icscpress.com/creativityrising

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