Coaching Manual

HPI Certification Program for Design Thinking Coaches

HPI Hasso Plattner Institut

1 Introduction

We would like to start off by congratulating you! Congratulations on making what we believe to be the best investment you can: an investment in yourself. You are here to learn how to become a design thinking coach, and this coaching manual is one part of your course at the *HPI Certification Program for Design Thinking Coaches.*

People often ask us how they can become the perfect design thinking coach, equipped with a shiny toolbox and all the skills – and they would like to do it in two days! The first thing we tell them is: there is no short-cut. There is no elevator to the top floor of this building. If you want to achieve real and long-lasting change, you have to take the stairs.

The second thing we tell them is: there is no such thing as a "perfect design thinking coach". Each of you comes with a different personality, background and experience. It is this unique combination that will shape how you coach others. A design thinking coach is not simply a repertoire of tools and methods which can be copy-pasted into different contexts: a coach is about who you are as a person and how you connect to and empower other people. Therefore, the road to becoming a design thinking coach is a highly personal journey and we hope you will take the opportunity to learn as much about yourself as possible.

1.1 **Why Become a Design Thinking Coach?**

You are here because you would like to become a design thinking coach. Many of you have similar reasons for participating in this course, but all of you also have personal reasons. What you all share, however, is a belief in the impact that can be reached through the creative power of design thinking and collaboration.

Before we start, we would like to share with you two things which strike us in our daily work. First of all, we often hear people telling us that they are not creative, and never have been. Therefore, they ask, how can they possibly be innovators? We live in an age in which people like to idolize the lone creative genius: the Steve Jobses and Leonardo da Vincis of the world. But this story does not reflect the whole truth. All inventions have been collaborations of some sort, because all ideas are inspired by, and built upon, the ideas and work of others. Design thinking is in many ways a simple catalyst: by bringing different people together in a constructive way, you can accelerate the process of sharing knowledge and ideas. And this is how creativity can flourish.

The second thing we have noticed over the years is that design thinking is very effective in binding different individuals and parties together to a shared vision. This is down to several factors. Firstly, the simple act of getting people involved in a project where they can have a real and tangible influence on the outcome is enough to create a sense of shared ownership. When people feel they have a stake in a project, they are more likely to pour their time and energy into it and consequently see it through until the end. Design thinking has the power to make people care. It makes them care about the problem, and those affected by it. This means that design thinkers are often intrinsically motivated. Secondly, since the team has chosen which painpoint they want to solve, they are bound to a common vision. Thirdly, people often enjoy this form of creative teamwork – and fun is essential in building and maintaining their intrinsic motivation.

Unfortunately, many of us are raised to believe that if we are having fun or enjoying our work, we are probably not being productive enough. Actually, we design thinkers believe the opposite. We place emphasis on empathy not just with users, but also between individuals within the team, in order to establish good team dynamics. Because let us be

honest with ourselves: we are all human. If you cannot stand a person and find them an unpleasant individual, you are also going to struggle to listen to what they say, even if they have a great insight or genius idea. Therefore good team dynamics and enjoying the work you do enables a better flow of knowledge, information and ideas within the team.

Both bringing people together to unleash their shared creative potential and binding people to a common vision are crucial in a world which is increasing in speed and complexity. Today's world and tomorrow's challenges need confident and creative individuals, teams and organizations more than ever. You, as a coach, play an important role in creating the right conditions for people to experience the benefits of this radically different way of working. By learning to coach teams through design thinking projects, you are taking a first and exciting step in what will be a very empowering journey: for yourself and others.

1.2 How to Use this Manual

This manual is for you to read and refer to on your learning journey. You started this journey with us at the *HPI Academy,* but as we explained above, the path to becoming a design thinking coach is above all a personal and individual one.

In each section, we outline our general approach and philosophy to coaching, as well as the main concepts we cover in our trainings.

This manual is by no means a coaching "bible". As you know, we believe that a good coach learns and improves through practicing, reflecting and iterating, not just through reading up on theory. This manual therefore is a helping hand, but not a leader. It is up to you to add and develop on these learnings with time, and forge your own path.

Like any skill or practice, there are no fixed rules for coaching design thinking. Just like many of the best musicians, authors or dancers break all the rules and conventions, you may come across ingenious design thinking coaches that pay little attention to the conventions we are about to lay out. And yet, just like the best musicians, authors or dancers, these ingenious design thinking coaches will more often than not break "rules" and conventions for a specific purpose or effect. So you can think

1 INTRODUCTION

of these "rules" and "conventions" as a useful scaffolding you can use to build your style and approach to design thinking coaching.

1.3 **Overview of Content**

This manual is structured based on your learning journey with the *HPI Academy.*

We start with giving you an introduction to design thinking in chapter two. This covers the four most important elements: team, mindset, process and space. This chapter ends with some words of encouragement from us to you: to find what it is that resonates the most with you about design thinking, and bring this forward as your own message.

The third chapter *Coaching Design Thinking* provides an overview of the role of the coach, or coaching, in design thinking.

The fourth chapter, *Coaching a Team,* examines the "art" of coaching a design thinking team. In it, we discuss the two main ways you can coach: either by reacting on a content level through giving methodological guidance; or by reacting on a team level, through setting up and maintaining conditions which support good team dynamics.

The fifth chapter, *Coaching in Context,* places the "art" of team coaching into context and examines everything that takes place before, after and around it. Design thinking coaches do not function in a vacuum, nor do they simply appear on the morning of the workshop and disappear completely at the end of the day. There is a whole range of preparation work which takes place before the design thinking intervention, and a great deal of following up to be done afterwards.