Design briefing via connected intellect

The most powerful unrecognised human force yet to boost business productivity and transformation is now the socially internet literate, connected, post-Facebook workplace mind, organised for purpose.

Here's a straightforward how-to to put it to work to apply your company's and customers' collective insights to delivering a superior customer experience (CX) and improved ROI through property products that will fit and perform better for your business in every dimension that matters most to those who will invest in, pay for and live and work in them.

As, at minimum, two of the nation's top commercial property owners and developers now employ dedicated CX managers, they aim to benefit by changing property's marketing game, and this will challenge others, likewise, to adapt their own business practices and responses.

Yet, because it is so far largely invisible, but contains by far the greatest long-term potential, the greatest competitive challenge to any business's ROI, including theirs, is most likely one neither you nor they have yet considered or begun to work on.

And against it, the asset to apply to your own advantage is already plentifully available and in easy arm's reach within your own business.

We may still be in the earliest years of the internet, but just as in your own company, every mind in every other business with which you compete is also now better connected than ever before.

And the degree of precision with which those minds can be steered in unison to drill down into, understand and articulate any organisation's problems and challenges is unprecedented.

With this power of enquiry, when they can be uncovered and known, such obstacles can also be overcome.
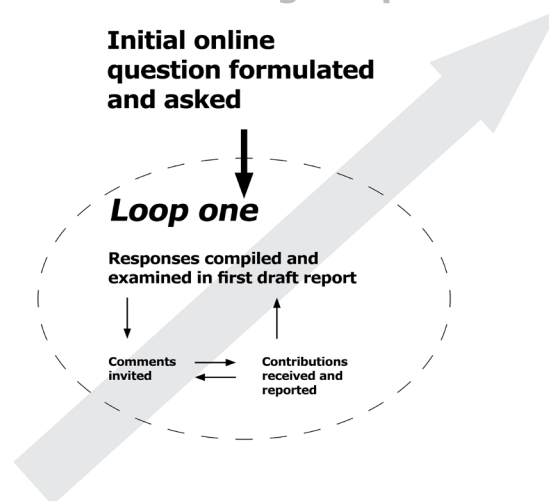
This makes it only a matter of time before someone sets a new standard for the ways in which they learn to organise the intelligence, tools and knowledge currently hidden within their business.

Thus, at the emerging knowledge frontier, when every business uses the cloud, the next killer app in every industry is unlikely to be a physical technology.

Much more disruptively, it will likely be the ease with which that rival can reach into its connected intellect in search of its own solutions and strategies.

The connected intellect briefing cycle, step one

From sense-making to smarter, more change-responsive ROI

Initial online question formulated and asked

Loop one

Responses compiled and examined in first draft report

Comments invited

Contributions received and reported

Because it will learn quickly how to work with and grow that collective intelligence, the adversary best able to mobilise that most potent resource in its business, at speed, will become the most formidable of competitors.

Against this reality, as property becomes, like all others connected to and by the internet, an information business, its most sophisticated operators – and survivors – will learn to support unprecedented forms of interrogation and reporting to users.

In achieving this, it will be the imagination and foresight with which others apply such focus to the specification of what they build, and how it is sold, that will strengthen their competitive edge – and determine the respective fates of those with which they compete.

So, knowing how to craft and sustain an intelligent response by making better sense of the intelligence, creativity and insight available to you will matter significantly if you are to formulate an appropriately prescient and agile response.

And in this, the resource to put to work in designing a better business and products – the post-Facebook connected intellect – is already present and at work at every desk within your own and every rival's business.

Further, by applying our unique, sense-making approach to the configuration and briefing of the designs you sell, we can get it working for your business, to build new and deeper value from the knowledge your people and your customers already hold.

What is the post-Facebook connected intellect?

Previously, it used to be hard, if not impossible, to capture and transform into usable information the knowledge and insights of those across an organisation.

Yet, as our use of and familiarity with using the social internet grows, we have reached an age of unprecedented opportunity in making the best use of intelligence across the web-age business.

Although it is still a force unrecognised, unexamined and therefore unorganised in most organisations, through near-ubiquitous familiarity with Facebook and others, we've now arrived at "peak social internet literacy."

This entirely naturally occurring capacity's practical applications are also easily demonstrated, as we have reached the point at which every employee in every business knows how to use social media to write online, upload and share material and to make comments about those items uploaded by others.

And when such communications are in writing and captured by the mirroring, private, internal Facebook-like or networked, document-sharing technologies now available within every business, workplace knowledge, insight and learning that was once out of reach is no longer beyond management's grasp.

Through the precise data it can drill down on, it also has access to a bottomless, renewable resource – an inexhaustible source for possible business and customer experience (CX)-improving investigation – whose creativity may be limited only by its imagination in what it asks for.
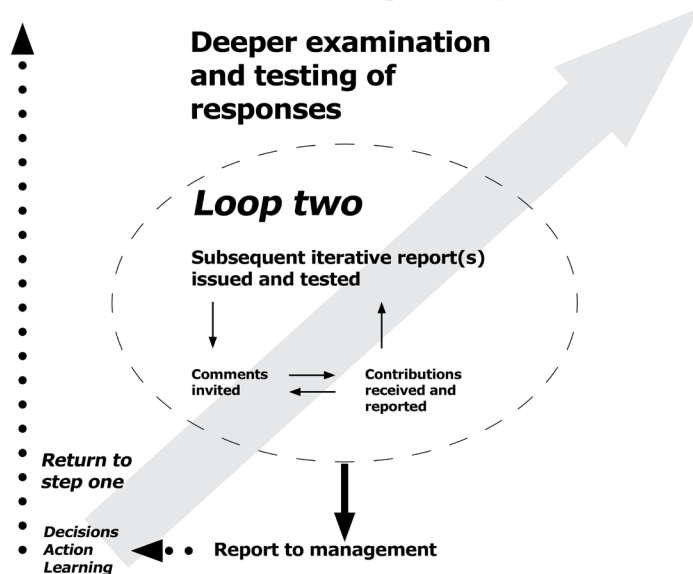
And when the human, social inputs for what is known can be understood and measured, these can also be altered and alternatives trialled – at next to no cost – to test for new results.

Through this, we can build a far superior understanding through which to manage, investigate and experiment with the relationships of the spaces they occupy to the creativity and knowledge-creating productivity of the individuals who live and work in them.

Because its use will lead to better buildings that more precisely meet the needs and expectations of users, the professional

The connected intellect briefing cycle, step two

From sense-making to smarter, more change-responsive ROI

Deeper examination and testing of responses

Loop two

Subsequent iterative report(s) issued and tested

Comments invited → ← **Contributions received and reported**

Return to step one

Decisions Action Learning ◄ • • **Report to management**

challenge now lies in inquiring, making sense of and feeding back to any group with diverse opinions what its members know and can contribute to understanding how to create better property.

The approach we advocate is not overly complicated, but a straightforward task of enquiring, reporting and sense-making, as used in the mainstream media which we are all familiar with and use every day.

With this reliable briefing process, you can build new value from what your people and your customers know

As architects with a distinctive and unique skill set, interest and study in organisational design and learning and first-hand experience in managing professional social workplace content, we at Shiro Architects are able to promote a more sophisticated briefing methodology.

But, architecture aside, as professional and social media production is something in which we can also demonstrate expertise, we know how to utilise social internet literacy to develop the design and management guidance that delivers a building that meets more precisely the needs of those who will use it.

Until it is harnessed, the idea of capturing a workplace's knowledge, let alone that of a customer base, sounds potentially chaotic and messy, but it is no different to that faced by news organisations reporting on the world every day.

As such, our solution isn't rocket science, but it is proven both by repeated personal experience of written sense-making over many years, as well as by centuries of learning and practice by others.

Clearly, you could just interview every one of your people or customers to find out what they think, as it might give you insights. However, it's clearly not the best use of anyone's time if you don't get what you need at the time you need it, and you feel you need to go back to ask again, or because what you want to know doesn't come to the interviewee's mind at the time you talk to them.

Such an approach would also likely yield less, because what you want to do to spark creativity or fresh insight is to encourage the clash of perspectives that will throw up unexpected lines of enquiry.

Whatever the purpose of the exercise, its goal is to report back to those involved and needing the information in a consistent, reliable fashion, such that the managers using it to make and check their decisions can drill down into this resource to keep on refining their approach to getting from it what they need.

Our briefing process therefore follows the diagrams above, and the sense-making rules that apply to all professional publishing, beneath.

Run your enquiry by using straightforward rules for publishable writing, if you wish to be understood

In professional media production, rule number one is that every writer needs a second reader, if, at minimum, to check facts and to ensure what is written can be understood by others.

At the most basic level, this ensures that what hits the page is what the writer intended.

Naturally, this is critical if that content is meant to propel shared understanding, learning and the development of intellectual growth across your workplace.

Unchecked, imprecisely written and random material is of no help to anyone, and is a waste of everyone's time.

The next fundamental, and perhaps the major task, is to ask questions whose responses, when reported back to the intended audience, advance the knowledge of those who will read them.

Keep on asking a better question

When we ask our question of a "crowd," we must make it unambiguous, framing what we wish to see in the responses we are soliciting.

The question may then be distributed via email, and/or via whichever collaborative technology we are using.

Whether their answers are to be made public when submitted, or kept private, respondents are steered via a link to make their contributions in a shareable document.

Transform responses into meaningful reports

The first wave of responses is then gathered, read and reviewed.

Ambiguous responses are checked and verified with their respective authors to ensure that what is contributed is what the writer intended, or corrected to make it so.

Then, when sense is made of them, these answers are compiled, edited and summarised in a preliminary report.

This first, deliberately unfinished, document is held up for further examination, as it is at this point that contributors first become aware of what others have written, which may spark other new thoughts, realisations or insights.

This report is then published in the chosen collaborative, shared technology medium, inviting scrutiny and comment to elicit the further questions its incomplete form raises.

In it, attention may be drawn to certain answers, or parts thereof, which may hold promise, and on which the "commissioning" manager – the one deciding what is to be asked – most wants subsequent focus.

This process is repeated and these questions are incorporated into further iterations of this report until management is satisfied it has the information it needs to make decisions.

This creates the platform from which to move on to the next questions arising, based on what management has learned and how this influences what you need to know next.

Give decision-makers a better tool

Through repetition of this process, this mechanism will reveal and report on the knowledge hidden within your organisation – and who has it – to give your leaders a new tool to work with.

Its cumulative effect will be to deliver, and to enable detailed investigation of, the collective learning that can help to build both the enhanced organisational sensitivity to its constantly shifting environment, and through this, its improved resilience.

It may be focused to frame better problem statements and to enhance the customer experience.

Then, as a leader, you can learn how regularly to dive into and report on what is known in your business, such that by discussing it, directing the search for further knowledge and steering its growth, you can repeatedly align those who have it better with its purpose and learn much faster how to turn this into greater advantage.

Give management workable deliverables

If I were to work with you, by drilling down on the resulting comments, and working with your nominated executive to ensure management's objectives are met, I would then edit and present a "final" report.

With you, I would amplify important findings to detail your recommendations and possible courses of action, such that these too may be checked for oversights, if necessary.

As a basic safeguard, at every step, this work must be conducted in concert with the leader or manager who commissions the work and wants the answers, to ensure it is always consistent with the business's objectives.

Generally speaking, the more minds and perspectives engaged on this task, and the more precise the instructions given to them to feed into this learning, the more reliable will be the outcome.

Property's future will be built inside the minds of customers

From the "knowledge architecture" point of view, any property creates an opportunity to learn more about that building's uses and users to develop new knowledge of how to satisfy its target audience's need, and therefore how to attract others like it.

By removing guessing to reduce risk, understanding customers better to get closer to them simply makes good business sense.

Briefing by tapping into the available connected intellect meets this need by enabling property providers to climb inside the minds of their "knowledge communities" to develop the most appropriate and best-fitting combinations of products and services.

This approach can construct an in-situ, digitised, collaborative, social online space through which users' and their communities' needs can be explored, understood and the future of the property relationship be designed according to explicit, identified demand.

Showing commitment to the occupancy relationship by demonstrating an intention to uphold product and service quality – however the customer perceives it – is straightforward QA, and makes simply for smarter marketing.

Ours is a practice built on award-winning architectural design skill, and now we are looking to cultivate partnerships with owners, developers, investors and builders keen to embrace the coming age of knowledge-driven architecture and the new future-shaping understandings and services the connected intellect can deliver.

Get closer to customers to reduce risk

We believe briefing via the connected intellect has a big future because, at minimum, it simply adapts long-standing qualitative market research practices found in other industries to the emerging needs and idiosyncrasies of property.

It also offers the most direct, economic and least risky route to sustained feedback, focused customer and user-community happiness.

Those who can learn to use it well are likely also to benefit from the distinctive branding, reputational differentiation and business growth that can be won by being seen to engage thoughtfully and appropriately with long-term customers.

As I have written elsewhere, because property, like all other businesses touched by the internet, is now also becoming an information business, against the use of better data, it is the cancer of ignorance that will kill others.

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Find more about my credentials to perform this work at: https://bit.ly/2ZZoCyj