Engaging Time-Poor Designers in Philanthropic Activities through Time-Bounded Events

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Abstract

As a company, Bloomberg L.P. is committed to encouraging and facilitating the philanthropic activities of its employees [1]. With initiatives in arts and culture, education, the environment, public health, and community, among others, Bloomberg employees donated almost 150,000 hours to philanthropy in 2017 [2]. Most of these hours are divorced from the skills used in their work; anyone can plant a tree or assemble meals for seniors. However, volunteering in areas where your unique skills are brought to bear can be have a great impact on the causes you support and can inspire young people in career choices and life-long philanthropy. As UX designers at Bloomberg, we want to explore the opportunities to do "design for good" through time-bound events.

Author Keywords

Design; philanthropy; hackathon; event.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

Introduction

In keeping with Bloomberg L.P.'s commitment to encouraging and facilitating its employees' philanthropic activities, UX designers look for opportunities to bring their unique skills to "design for good". Such activities can benefit the causes with which we work and also inspire young people in career choices and life-long engagement with philanthropy.

While these goals are lofty, as professionals in a competitive field, we are "time-poor", with little leisure time to spend long hours on personal philanthropy. However, we believe that these philanthropic goals can be coincident with company goals, like increasing Bloomberg's reputation and supporting recruiting of talented employees.

Bloomberg has developed extensive experience in hosting events centered on programming, e.g., the global CodeCon hackathons [3] and we are considering extending a similar framework to UX design. We wish to participate in the Time-Bounded Events Workshop at CHI 2018 to (1) understand how time-bounded events might help us meet our diverse goals and (2) provide an industry perspective on academic research about time-bounded events.

Our Goals and Constraints

Our goals for a time-bound event are threefold:

- Do impactful design for good as a philanthropic activity.
- Provide a meaningful experience for young people to help in a UX design career choice and

- Start them on a path to lifelong engagement in philanthropy.
- Increase the reputation of Bloomberg L.P. among UX academics, professionals and students for the purpose of recruiting.

The constraints under which we would like to achieve these goals are:

- A time-bound event of no more than one full day of professional designers' or students' time
- Follow a user-centered design process

In creating an event under these constraints, to achieve these goals, there are a myriad of design decisions. We would like the input from workshop participants' research and experience to help make these decisions.

Questions to Explore

Some of the questions we would like to explore during the workshop include the following.

How can a user-centered design process fit into a 1-day event?
As so often happens in UX design, the constraints fight against each other, making it hard to achieve the goals. A user-centered design process takes time; how best to use the limited time in a day and still follow the spirit of that process? Some possibilities, each with their own pros and cons, include the following.

- Perform interviews of appropriate users ahead of the event and make videos and transcripts available during the event. Participants will not exercise their

data-collection skills, but will have material from which to do user-centered design.

- Have the philanthropic partner provide appropriate users to be interviewed by the event participants in the early part of the day. Have participants share their findings before starting design.
- Pick a philanthropic domain where the event participants themselves are appropriate users and have them interview each other.

How best to engage time-poor students in this event?
Not only are UX professionals time-poor, but students have class, and sometimes work, commitments to balance against opportunities like this event. Some ideas include the following.

- Have the event at or near a university with the cooperation of faculty in a User-Centered Design class. Perhaps participation could somehow be part of the curriculum to help free up some time for the students.
- Have the event at or near a UX conference with traditionally high student attendance. This arrangement would likely get participation by students from many universities, offering the opportunity for experience more broadly, as well as spreading Bloomberg's reputation more widely.

What is the role for UX professionals in the event?
Are we observers, swooping in if we see a group get stuck or go down a rabbit hole? Are we the experienced half of a master/apprentice relationship? Are we team members, co-designing along with the student participants? What role(s) would best balance success

toward the producing goal, the education/inspiration goal, and the company branding goal?

What format of deliverable can best achieve the goals?
Are "pitch decks" a good deliverable to for allowing the philanthropic partners to make use of the results and provide portfolio content for the participants? Do we need to provide sufficient support so running prototypes can be delivered?

Should the procedures be piloted before the event?
An academic would never run and experiment without one or more pilot runs. Should we try out the format internally with our employees to establish procedures, flow, timing, tools, and deliverables? Do we risk our reputation if we don't have such a run-through?

Finally, how do we measure the success of the event?
Since there are multiple goals, both short and long-term, how can they be measured?

- Has there been a positive impact on the philanthropic partner in the event? How can the output be something they can use to further their work after the event?
- Did the students have a meaningful experience that helps them in their life?
- Did this event start the students on a path of philanthropy? Do they continue on that path?
- Has Bloomberg's reputation been enhanced, especially with respect to future recruiting?
- Might partnering with researchers interested in studying the effects of time-bounded events benefit the participants, sponsors, and researchers alike?

Applicants' Backgrounds

Bonnie E. John is a user experience designer and researcher working on discoverability tools and tools for finanical quants at Bloomberg. An academic for Carnegie Mellon for 25 years, and head of the Masters in HCI there for over a decade, she is interested in helping students realize happy and successful lifework.

Paddy O'Flaherty is a user experience designer working on tools for financial quants at Bloomberg. He has organized several one day conferences for designs and is interested in combining this with his philanthropic interests. He has over 25 years of industry experience.

Shahtab Wahid is a user experience designer working on collaboration tools at Bloomberg. He has mentored research and design interns from various schools and looks forward to continuing relationships with academic institutions through events such as design-a-thons. He earned his doctorate degree studying Human-Computer Interaction at Virginia Tech.

Anthony Viviano is a user experience designer, currenlty at Bloomberg, producing both client-facing mobile applications and tools for engineers to manage systemuptime. He will bring his experience informally mentoring young people with an interest in design to the design of effective time-bound experiences.

References

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