Supporting employees and future-proofing skills

The problem

When Covid-19 struck the UK it forced the issue of how to support people working from home, often under severe circumstances.

For employees in Health Innovation West of England, (previously known as the West of England Academic Health Science Network), it challenged them because part of their role is to spread innovation skills to health and care employees across the West of England.

With this context of home-working, a growing need for digital literacy, and high-pressure health and care challenges, the team was wondering how to help health and care employees to innovate, while supporting and equipping themselves at the same time.

Dave Evans was Associate Director of Innovation Projects at the time, and he engaged Bluegreen Learning in 2021 to support his team of 8 people, with online training and support designed to build:

- Their Design-Thinking skills for innovation.
- Digital literacy on the collaborative platform, miro.
- Their confidence and resourcefulness, equipping them to spread these skills to health and care employees in the region.

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What we did

We ran 5 x online train-the-trainer sessions, hosted on zoom, and supported by the collaborative workspace, miro. The learning topics covered:

- Exploring and defining the challenge.
- Idea generation
- Idea shortlisting and selection
- Concept development and testing
- Business case development

In learning these skills, the team chose to apply them to the real work challenge of equipping themselves to support others' efforts to innovate. They defined their own challenge:

Let's learn these design-thinking skills, so we can develop evolutionary and revolutionary change that support sustainable innovation, improve productivity and enhance staff satisfaction. Success criteria include implementing new models by specific timelines, measuring impact on people, and evaluating outcomes through surveys and feedback.

The team generated 220 ideas, scaled them from more evolutionary to revolutionary, and chose and shortlisted 4 concepts, with a balance along the continuum. They developed and shared the concepts, receiving feedback and improving them.
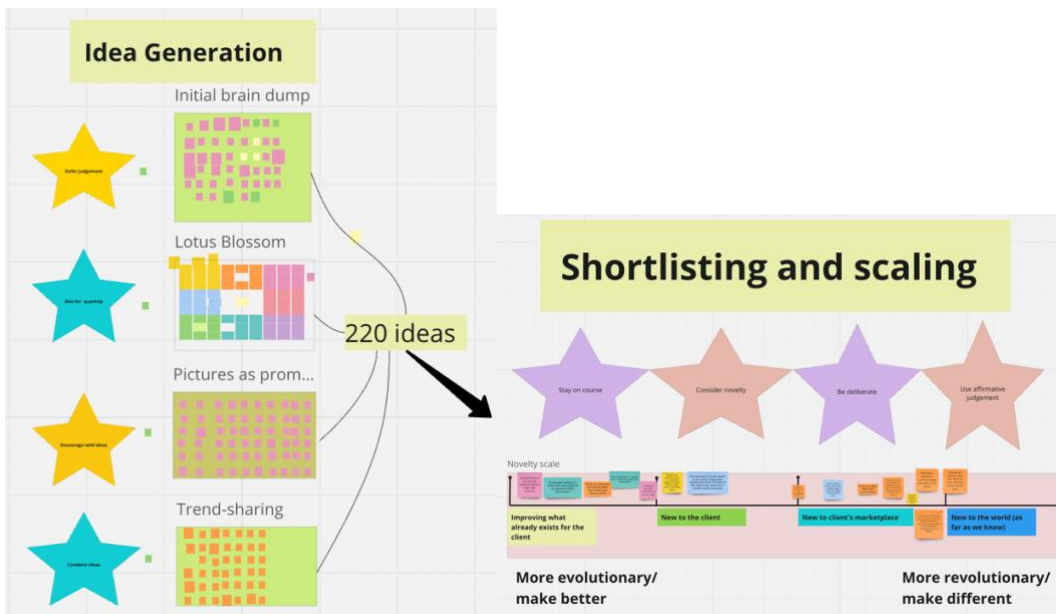
We also developed a set of digital resources for the learners, including an overall digital workbook that captured all the design-thinking tools; along with PowerPoint slides and educational videos to support each topic. These learning resources were also made available to employees across the region:

Learning outcomes

Now in his Deputy Director of Programmes role, Dave Evans explains the impact of the work:

"We used the Design thinking approach to develop an internal toolkit of training and resources for our own staff taking feedback from a recent staff opinion survey and a subsequent focus group. It helped us to better understand the real learning needs of team members and to develop effective solutions that are more likely to be used."

As a result of the team learning to use these tools, they have spread them wider, helping others learn these skills.

In 2023 there were 402 users of these digital resources.

"Additionally, we have delivered training in the use of some of the more popular tools with colleagues who work in our local health and care systems, in both an online programme of two x half day training events and also a separate 1 day face to face training.

And we ran a creative problem solving session with stakeholders from across the system, health and care professionals, council employees and representatives from the voluntary sector who wanted to develop thinking around activities that could be undertaken in a community hub in an area of Bristol, which was very well received by the participants."

Dave Evans, Deputy Director of Programmes, Health Innovation West of England, explains why they have a version of the toolkit on their website, which is freely available, alongside other resources, for all health and care professionals to use:

We were attracted to the creative problem solving toolkit as it sets out a straightforward methodology for design thinking and many of the tools and techniques are highly practical and easy to use. The addition of videos to explain how some of the more popular tools can be used to facilitate innovative thinking, alongside downloadable templates, makes it much easier for busy NHS staff and colleagues working across social care to access and use the tools with minimum effort.

Bluegreen Learning

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