Applying design thinking to public health research:
 a Real Talk case study

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Who am I?
What is Real Talk?

Real Talk is a mobile app for teens ages 13-15 that uses real stories by real teens to convey relevant and credible information about sexual health.

Users can browse, search, and share stories and access linked high-quality online resources within the app.
Today, I will:

• Present an overview of design thinking;
• Describe our design thinking approach for developing our Real Talk app with teens; and
• Offer some opportunities for innovation.
DESIGN THINKING
OVERVIEW
What is design thinking?

"Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.

—TIM BROWN, CEO OF IDEO
What is design thinking?

Emotional innovation

People
Desirability

Business
Viability

Technology
Feasibility

Process innovation

Functional innovation

* sweet spot

IDEO.org, 2015
Design thinking is:
  • an approach/process
  • a set of methods; and
  • a set of mindsets.
What is the design thinking approach?
Traditional problem solving
Design thinking

Solution
What are the design thinking methods?
What are the design thinking mindsets?

1. Creative confidence
2. Make it
3. Learn from failure
4. Empathy
5. Embrace ambiguity
6. Optimism
7. Iterate, iterate, iterate

IDEO.org, 2015
THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

How might we develop a technological solution for teen pregnancy?
Our specific design challenge

How might we increase access to high-quality, comprehensive sexual health education to teens ages 13 to 15 across the U.S.?
Initial Idea

Sex ed mobile app for schools

- Facts/stats
- Tests/quizzes
- Q&A
The purpose of the Inspiration Phase is to learn directly from the people you’re designing for. You immerse yourself in their lives in order to deeply understand their needs.
Method #1: Extremes and mainstreams

An idea that suits extreme users will nearly certainly work for the majority of others.
Method #2: Card sorts
Key findings:

• Schools are **not** a preferred place to learn about sex and relationships
• Teens care about privacy, source credibility, and safety
• They get their info from peers, Google, and porn
• Teens prefer to use smartphones instead of computers to access Google and porn
The purpose of the Ideation Phase is to identify opportunities for design and to prototype (i.e. test) possible solutions with real intended users.
How might we...share facts and stories about sex and relationships with teens ages 13-15?
Method #4: Rapid prototyping

ExploreMe vs. xHealth
Ideation

Key findings:

• Teens want to know that they’re not alone
• Teens want to read stories (not facts)
• Teens want to read text message convos instead of prose
• Teens like reading stories from different perspectives
The purpose of the Implementation Phase is to turn your idea into reality and to test it in the real world.
Method 5: Live prototyping
Method 6: Pilot

Key findings for web prototype Pilot Test #2 (5 days, 10 users):

• The average user session lasted 4 min, 56 sec

• Most user sessions (55%) occurred after school (3 pm – 7 pm) and before bed (7 pm – 12 am)

• Users viewed an average of 4.16 stories per session

• 30% of users used the search bar
Implementation

Key findings:

• The name of the app matters
• The App Store description matters
• Teens wanted to browse stories easily (like Instagram)
• Teens wanted to continue to inform decision-making (Teen Advisory Board formation)
Implementation

We released the beta version of our Real Talk app in the iTunes App Store in September 2017.

Available features:
• Read stories
• Search stories
• Click on links to learn more
• Submit stories
Implementation
Implementation

Current updates (as of 10/7/19):

• 14,500+ users with users in all 50 states and 100+ countries
• Total stories read in-app: 161,943
• Total resources accessed in-app: 8,989
• 73%+ of users found Real Talk stories helpful
• 66% users learned something new in reading their first 10 stories
Implementation

Partners and supporters

This opportunity is made possible by Grant Number TP2AH000023-01-00

[Logos of various organizations]
OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION
How might we create funding opportunities...

- Where populations and health problems are identified but the solutions are less prescribed?
- That expect meaningful engagement with intended audiences in all stages of solution design, development, and implementation?
- That require multiple iterations of proposed solutions and real world testing?
- That foster greater collaboration (instead of competition) among grantees?

Got questions? Email Liz at liz@myhealthed.org.
References


APPENDIX
# Real Talk logic model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>User Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Short-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Mid-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-Term Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Curated stories about sexual health topics aligned to national standards</td>
<td>* Read stories</td>
<td>* # of users</td>
<td>* Increased knowledge about sexual health topics</td>
<td>* Delayed sexual initiation</td>
<td>* Reduced teen pregnancy rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* External online sexual health content (e.g., Sex, Etc., Amaze.org)</td>
<td>* React to stories</td>
<td>* # stories read</td>
<td>* More positive attitudes towards sexual risk reduction</td>
<td>* Fewer sexual partners</td>
<td>* Reduced STI rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* In-app story submission portal</td>
<td>* Search for additional stories</td>
<td>* # external links clicked</td>
<td>* Increased perceived norms supporting sexual risk reduction</td>
<td>* Increased condom use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* In-app search and story reaction function</td>
<td>* Access additional linked resources</td>
<td>* Time spent on external links</td>
<td>* More positive outcome expectations regarding sexual risk reduction</td>
<td>* Increased contraceptive use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Technology</td>
<td>* Submit stories</td>
<td>* # stories submitted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Personnel</td>
<td>* # of app / content shares</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Innovation Next Accelerator

01/2016-08/2016
Phase 1

• 10 teams of three selected to join Cohort 1
• 10 teams were awarded $80K (Inspiration)
• 10 teams provided with IDEO training
• 10 teams participated in Pitch Day and put forth one idea to launch
• 5 teams selected to move forward to develop MVP

11/2016-05/2018
Phase 2

• 5 teams received $325K to develop MVP by May 2018 (Ideation, Implementation)
• 5 teams provided with IDEO training and ongoing technical assistance for design thinking
• 5 teams delivered MVPs to Power to Decide
## Design thinking & Community-based Participatory Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Human-Centered Design</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Community-Based Participatory Research</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td>Relationship-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shifting power dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delight</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Generating action</th>
<th>Engages users/partners in all stages</th>
<th>Generating research for future action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scalable solutions</td>
<td>Provides a benefit to intended stakeholders</td>
<td>Localized, contextual solutions</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Short timeline</th>
<th>Systematic</th>
<th>Long timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid iteration cycles with low fidelity prototypes</td>
<td>Flexible/adaptable</td>
<td>Focus on communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on individual extreme users</td>
<td>Generalizable</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transdisciplinary team</td>
<td>Iterative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Requires training to execute</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clients/partners sustain efforts at project conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Primary outcome is product/service</th>
<th>Bidirectional knowledge exchange</th>
<th>Primary outcome is research/knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sole ownership of product/service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-ownership of research/knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity building</td>
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