

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

[0:00]

CHAD: Hi, this is Chad, your host and founder of Product Innovation Educators, where product managers learn to become product masters. Product management is about change; the change that creating new products involves. Along the way, product managers need to learn about customers and their needs, consider problems from different perspectives (reframing the problems), and collaborating with others. A person with deep experience in doing these things and helping groups and organizations identify and push through barriers of innovation is Chuck Appleby. He is a leadership and organizational development consultant with over 30 years of management, consulting, and coaching experience in government, industry, and nonprofit organizations. In the interview, we discuss two valuable tools for products managers and organizations who wish to solve problems for themselves and their customers. The first one is action learning and the second one is design thinking. To get the notes of the discussion, the summary as well as the transcript, along with the resources that Chuck discussed, go to www.theeverydayinnovator.com/082. Now, to the interview!

[1:21]

CHAD: Chuck, thanks so much for being part of the Everyday Innovator podcast!

CHUCK: My pleasure. Great to be here, Chad.

CHAD: So, we met a few years ago, and the way that we met was with something that's not around anymore, unfortunately, called the Monfort Institute. This was a research arm of the University of Northern Colorado, and really doing some very innovative research around how do you transform organizations. The person that put that together was John Latham, who was on a previous episode with me. He brought you in to help facilitate some of the training development and the education, and brought me in, too, and that's how we got connected. You taught us a tool there, which I'm hoping we'll hear a little more about, called action learning. You also have been doing a lot of work with design thinking. I'm not quite sure what we'll end up talking about but I wanted to get you on an episode to dive into both of these things. I'll just start with the design thinking context. Tell us what you were doing at the time that led you into learning about design thinking and then applying that.

CHUCK: Yeah. So there's a connection between action learning and design thinking, and that is, for years and years I had been helping companies solve tough problems using action learning, which was a method developed at the Cavendish Physics Lab in Cambridge University by a professor named Reg Revans who had gotten very concerned that the world was changing so fast and if we continue to rely simply on universities, consultants, etcetera, that we would never achieve the kind of speed of innovation that was needed to keep up with change. So he invented this concept called action learning, which really relies on the power of a group of people, of diverse people, to ask powerful questions to help develop new knowledge. So the idea is, you combine existing knowledge from academia, consulting, etc., with the knowledge that's created by a group of, again, diverse people who are focused on a particular problem and who use powerful questions and reflection to come up with new knowledge. He even brought in the inventors of DNA, Watson and Crick, to his physics lab. So the story goes, they got more Nobel prizes in the next decade as a result of the wild and crazy questions these biologists and chemists were asking the physicists. Like, what would happen if you looked from inside the neutron instead of staring at it from the outside? And that would create, you know, "Oh my gosh, I

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

never thought about that” kinds of reactions. So I noticed, though, that action learning was a bit too analytical and didn’t have that creative spark that I was looking for and that led me to design thinking.

CHAD: So, a lot of your work these days is helping other organizations think through complicated problems.

CHUCK: Exactly.

CHAD: And, are you applying both of these tools? Are you applying them separately? Or are you using them together?

[4:24]

CHUCK: So, actually, the framework I use, simple concept, Discover, Design, Deploy, and Sustain. And so, the Discovery part of it uses action learning to do what I think is so often missed, probably in 80-90% of the cases I work with, people bring a challenge in but when we use action learning to really frame the challenge, we find it something slightly different or in some cases very different than the original presenting challenge. The next step is Design, where obviously design thinking comes into play. Deploy, I integrate principles of social psychology in how to get this new idea actually into the mix, and then finally Sustain is really relying on the tools of John Latham, as you mentioned. People like him are thinking about how do we build organizations that have a culture, have a strategy that’s all aligned, and leadership that’s aligned around making change happen.

CHAD: Very good. That experience that the three of us shared at Monfort Institute...I think the Institute lasted for five or six years, and it was a research arm of the business school. It really, like I said, did some interesting research into how do companies transform to higher levels of performance and sustain themselves. That was a pleasure to be a part of. When you are applying action learning, I know we can spend all of our time talking about just that, and I also want to get to design thinking, but can you give us kind of the quick overview, and also, maybe if there’s a resource I could include in the show notes, I’ll do that, for how people think about action learning. What are the big steps in action learning?

CHUCK: Yeah, there’s really five steps. The first step is the one that gives a lot of people a challenge. We give the problem-owner, or challenge-owner or opportunity-owner only about 3-5 minutes to describe their challenge. And the reason behind that is that so often, people, and I’ve had this happen, come in with a deck of 100 slides and they want to get everyone on the same page and thinking like they think, and one of the keys to action learning is to help you think in different ways. To get what we call position shifts, and to see the problem through different lenses. So, the second step is the framing step, the most challenging, because that’s where we actually...I use a little model of framing landscape which is pretty basic. Trying to get people to focus on the desired future, what’s going on in today’s reality, what are the forces outside, what are the underlying assumptions we’re making, and then to get them to really hone in on what I call the core challenge. What’s that barrier or void, or unexploited opportunity that’s really preventing us from getting where we want to be. More and more, I hear people tell me that the thing that gives them the most challenge is defining what the future is. So just last week, I’m with an IT and Ops group from a financial services company and I hear over and over again, how we often rush into problems without really understanding the problem from the customer’s viewpoint, and really defining success. More than just features and functions. Defining success in a way that speaks to the human

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

drives and human dimension and that's the connection to design thinking. The third step is solutioning. Everybody's pretty good at that; people are great at solving problems for the most part, as long as we're solving the right problem. Then we commit to action, and then we reflect. In every meeting, there's this presenting the challenge, defining the challenge, working on the solution, commitment to action, and reflection on how we did in problem solving. So in each meeting, we're really stopping to reflect on what could we do better when we meet the next time to solve a problem?

[8:08]

CHAD: When you work through these five steps, about how much time are you, when you say in each meeting you say you're getting through all five in one meeting. About how long is one of those meetings?

CHUCK: Yeah. So typically it's two to three hours. Just a typical project where say, we're given a challenge by, let's just call it the IT and Ops group in a financial services organization might have given a group the challenge of, How do we migrate into the Cloud? It might take us three or four meetings of two hours each to actually frame the challenge. So, and that gets people frustrated because the Type A's, you know, want to move right in, the engineering mindset is, "Just give me the problem and let me solve it." And so you get a lot of sort of grumpy, "Why do we keep having to do this?" And it's not till the end of the whole project where they realize, "Oh my gosh, we could have gone down the wrong path." The solutioning takes, you know, probably a couple of months of meeting for a couple hours a week, sometimes more. By the end of two or three months, you've got a solution, then you work on how do we make it stick, how do we deploy it, and how do we present it to our leaders, sort of get buy-in and move on. So a typical project is 4-5 months. Oftentimes I'm doing this in the context of a leadership development program, so people are devoting 20% of their time to focus on this project for the leadership program.

CHAD: Okay. But working through just an action learning experience to solve a problem, that isn't necessarily the 4-5 months, right? That's something that, I'm sure this all depends on context and what you actually frame. But I had the pleasure of being with you in a workshop where you led a person through that was in the healthcare setting, solving a problem for a hospital. Our whole meeting was probably two hours or so, right? And she walked out of this meeting, and I have to say, you told us ahead of time what to expect, how action learning kind of worked, and my thought was, "Wow, so we're just going to sit around and talk about the problem for a while and come up with solutions. That sounds pretty straightforward." And it is pretty straightforward to construct, but I was amazed by the new ideas that had never been considered that came out of that two-hour session. So much of it was framing the problem in the right way. It makes me think of Einstein's quote, which I love, and I will paraphrase, when he said, "If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend the first 55 minutes framing it, thinking about it, exploring the problem, and then 5 minutes actually solving it."

[10:56]

CHUCK: Absolutely. And I actually use that quote and I tell people we're probably not going to use 90% of our time framing the problem, but we're going to get a lot more into it than you're probably used to. So yeah, in just two hours you can get some great framing done, get some new ideas. When I say it's a four-month process, it's obviously, you take those ideas and you start working them to ground and

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

again, I think that's where design thinking comes in, is now that we've got some general ideas about the world we're looking at, the frame we're looking through, let's go out and do discovery, a deeper discovery, and do solutioning from there.

CHAD: So, let's make that transition to design thinking. So, in your framework of helping organizations make changes, you said Discovery, Design, Deploy and Sustain. So, action learning being used for the Discovery element of it. Then as you move into Design, is this where you start using design thinking concepts?

CHUCK: Yes, so each one of these tools has a set of mindsets and so we never lose the practice of asking powerful questions throughout the whole 4-step process, 4-stage process. We always honor the need from action learning to bring diverse people to the table to help us solve it. So the mindsets and some of the tools continue on throughout and we also begin with the end in mind, in the sense that, in order to deploy well and sustain, one of the principles is that you have to have radical collaboration. You have to bring diverse people in from the organization, some of whom might be absolutely opposed to the idea, to help you create the new idea. So that's back to our third step, Deploy, and the change management principles that oftentimes the best way to help ensure change is going to happen is to engage the resistors, to put them in your tent with you and help them build a solution.

CHAD: Okay. I want to talk about a specific example of design thinking, but first, we see this applied to all kinds of contexts, not just developing products, which is where I typically think of it. It came out of IDEO, the design powerhouse, and is often associated, rightly so, with D School at Stanford, the design school. For Everyday Innovators listening, a great episode to go back to is Episode 19, www.theeverydayinnovator.com/019. We through there the five steps of design thinking with Ethan Appleby, which happens to be one of your sons, one of your three sons. Ethan is doing this great work out in San Francisco with an art startup, making individual art accessible to anyone that wants it, and how to buy it, and he has this wonderful story about how he applied design thinking to win a hackathon, and created this business. But go to Episode 19 to get the details of this. Chuck, tell us about where you've seen design thinking apply, just kind of the breadth of applications that you've come across.

[14:00]

CHUCK: Yeah, so I really notice that a lot of the people in the financial services industry have been very anxious to adopt design thinking, both the IT, the backroom part of it as well as the front room, so I have actually worked a lot in design thinking for financial institutions. I worked in county government, I've worked in government agencies, I've worked with nonprofits. Again, it's often more than just a product. My most recent job was with the Department of Human Services in Arlington. Their challenge was how do we get, now that we are all on one campus, how do we make it easier for people to access our services but also in a way that integrates all the services together. So you can see that it often can be applied to some things that are pretty intangible, and creating a better experience. People from the software world certainly are aware of the user experience work that's being done. Agile and folks who are doing Agile, you know, I think you can think of design thinking as a great way, a great front end, for Agile. In other words, get that problem framed, get some good ideas, and once you're ready to go on with these sort of prototype concepts, and onto detailed design, Agile can just bolt right in very easily,

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

and continue some of the same mindsets. Like radical collaboration, like bringing in people from all walks of life to review your product every two weeks.

CHAD: Yeah, I like the breadth of examples you gave there. A lot of your work has been in financial services, but this has been applied to nonprofits and government agencies, and that service dimension. So many times, well, let me back up. I think about IDEO and where their roots were, which was developing consumer products, right? So, they took the mouse and made it better and designed the computer mouse for Apple. They've designed toothpaste, and microwave ovens, and shoelace things, and a whole wide range of products. Then over time, they started applying what they did to organizations, and how do we make organizations better. When you talk about services, a big movement that's going on now with companies, has been for a while, is how do we wrap services around our tangible products, to enter new markets and provide more value to customers, and extend the markets that we're already in?

CHUCK: That's a great point. And I just helped a financial services company in Boston, the IT and Operations group, and what they're seeing of course, is with the advent of the Cloud and big data, they're seeing a huge shift from just being an order-taker and provider of infrastructure and apps, to being capable of enhancing the business, through the tools that IT can bring to the table. That's causing a whole new shift in the way they're working with their partners, and in creating customer experiences. So they're getting very heavily involved in the customer experience as we move to more the mobile, the digitized world, where the software tools we're developing are directly interfacing with the end-user.

[17:14]

CHAD: Absolutely. And in design thinking, we walk through five steps, right? We go through empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping and testing, all in Episode 19, details there for Everyday Innovators listening. It's that empathy dimension which I think is so...that's where we start in looking at who is our customer, really, and what is the problem that they're really having, and how can we add value to their lives?

CHUCK: Yes.

CHAD: Can you walk us through an example from your experience, where design thinking was applied? I'd like to start with, what was going on in the organization? Kind of that situational perspective of what was their problem to start with, what kind of things did they consider, why did they choose design thinking? So, what's the situation that a company had that ended up choosing design thinking for the problem?

CHUCK: Yeah. I think probably one of the most telling stories that I have is the public library in Arlington County. I actually have a video that I can share with you, a 12-minute video, that walks through at least a part of their process. But the central challenge was, and this bears on all businesses, we're not engaging with certain groups of customers. So in the case of the library, they were not seeing teenagers, they were not seeing the creative class, the 30-somethings, in the library, and they weren't seeing a lot of new immigrants. So we created three teams, and design thinking was something that the head librarian wanted to try, she'd heard about it. So we trained the library staff as well as this leadership development cohort who was the actual team doing the work. We trained them in design thinking and

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

divided them up into three groups to interview those three cohorts, and the story in the film is the 30-somethings. We don't just go ask about the library. In fact, the questions they developed had nothing to do with the library, except it focused on the library's mission, which is a love of reading, access to information, and building community. So those were the questions that were asked. So they didn't go and say, "Well, would you like more ebooks?", or the sort of standard questions we ask oftentimes in market research. They just asked these basic questions, for example, "What do you like to do?" The insight that came out was, "We like to meet new people doing fun things." So the library came up with a couple of great ideas, one of which was an annual ball to raise money for literacy. It was called the F. Scott Fitzgerald Ball. It was a dress-up, 30-somethings piled in, you know, in hoards, and began to make a connection with the library.

[19:53]

CHUCK: They also had a recess night in the library once a month, with games throughout, and people showed up to play together, in the library. For the teenagers, they heard over and over again, "what do you like to do?" "Well, we like to eat." Of course, there's no food in the library. But they felt this need so deeply, that they said, "We got to do something about this." The library now has food in the library. There's now teenagers in the library. So the impact is, they wanted to engage a new set of customers. They tapped into their deeper needs, not just their features and functions kind of approach, and they then inferred and developed novel solutions, which they tested, and ended up, they continue after three years, to use the bucket of ideas that were developed during this initial phase. So I guess an obvious question would be, "So what do you need to have to make design thinking successful?" And I recently interviewed this financial service company that I had worked with, and I got some great answers. Probably the most important one was, you need a driver. So what's a driver? A driver's a person who works with the design teams and the prototyping and testing, and is there making sure that they're not going back to the old ways. So let me give you an example. They developed a prototype, and their plan on the problem, which was how do we create greater engagement in the workplace? They built a PowerPoint briefing for their VP and Terry, the woman's name who was the driver, said, "You got to be kidding me, that's the way we always develop a presentation." They said, "Build a physical prototype, let them come in and touch it." They put little tags on it—what he liked and what he didn't. At the end of the story, they were resistant, but Terry got them to go through these processes, and John, the Vice President, said, "Oh my gosh, I love this stuff." And the team looked at Terry and said, "You know what, Terry? Everything that John loved were the things that you made us do that followed the principles, mindsets, and processes of design thinking." So there's nothing like a little validation of taking a risk, trying something different, and how easy it is to go back to the old ways.

CHAD: I think that's always the draw for any kind of change we're doing, to try to convince a group to try something new, it's like, "Yeah, but we're connected to what we've done before." That's the real challenge.

CHUCK: To let go, yeah.

CHAD: That's a great point about having that driver. Were there other points that also came up about making design thinking successful? You didn't highlight it, but in what you said was sharing the prototype, and that was a big change for them, was working with something physical instead of just

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

talking about it or maybe putting words up on a PowerPoint slide, but working really with something physical that they could touch and see and interact with.

[23:06]

CHUCK: I think the other thing related to that, and this speaks to Agile, certainly, as well—being able to show somebody something that's not perfect, knowing that the whole purpose of this does not just sort of get them to absolutely buy off into it, but to make sure it's right, to give you feedback, to adjust and move on, and not take criticism as a devastating blow, but as a gift, to help make sure by the end of the project, they've got exactly what they want. I think the other things that you need to have, and this I learned from the head of GE Healthcare's innovation team, he called it you need to have a dream team. You need to spend time picking the right people for the team, people who want to be there, and developing some camaraderie for the team before you launch off into this. I think another key success factor is in the spirit of not being perfect, of letting go the need for perfection, is the idea of not giving them something that's so complete and so beautiful that they don't want to touch it. You want to actually give them a piece of, you know, turkey bone is an image that I think of, with just enough meat on it to say, "This tastes really good." And then let the customer actually help you flesh out the bone itself. So that they feel part of it. That gets us back to deploying and sustaining. If they're a part of it, they're going to buy into it much easier.

CHAD: Yeah, and that's again starting design thinking with that empathy aspect, that this is not you trying to convince the customer that they need your solution, this is deeply understanding what the customer really values and in a real sense, co-designing with them throughout this design thinking activity, and evolving those prototypes and letting them lead that activity.

CHUCK: Yes. Just one final thing, and that's just... at the front end, to really try to get in the ballpark, and this is where a lot of design thinking I think falls down, we just take the problem as given, but to actually frame it. And then within the context of when you're in the designing framing, you may learn, in the middle of all this, that you're on a wrong track, and again, linking this with agile, the whole point is if you're doing this prototype test, you can fail early and really adapt much more quickly than waiting six more months and spending a lot of money, and it becomes almost impossible to change.

CHAD: I want to go back to ask you about the library. So, they recognized a situation. They had an objective. They wanted to engage a new set of customers as participants in the library, and have the local community use the library more richly than they were right now. You said that the director there already knew about design thinking, and thought that was something worth trying. Those might be the situations you run into a lot of the time, right? It's like design thinking is already the right fit here. But can we talk a little bit about other things that people do consider, and that they might end up at design thinking later? I don't know if you've been a part of those situations, but you know, this director could look at that and say, "Well, you know, we need to do some market research." Or voice of the customer research, or maybe we just need a new marketing communication campaign here to tell the community, you know, we'll send mailers out to everyone. What other kinds of things get considered maybe before design thinking gets considered?

[26:37]

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

CHUCK: I think there's certainly other tools. Lean startup comes to mind, where, and I think this is something that R&D organizations are famous for. The R&D organization comes up with a new idea and then takes it out into the marketplace and gets that same kind of feedback. So it's just you're actually gaining empathy in that case, more after the fact, or in a second phase. That works fine, too. I think the point of design thinking is if you can do that earlier, so much the better, because you're much more likely to resonate with them if you've really probed. But the real world is, you know, people have got products. A lot of people are, like in the defense industry, in the Washington DC area, a lot of technology's been developed that people want to use in a commercial sense. So that becomes more of a lean startup sort of, not even a lean startup, but you're looking for how we translate this technology into something that can be useful. That's where, again, stopping and saying, let me just go back, look at an area, say healthcare, that this might be applicable to, and go in and use the design thinking, sort of fresh-eye approach, of what really drives these people, and then makes inferences and connections to the product that you already have on the shelf.

CHAD: Absolutely. There's this collection of tools that are so closely related and so complementary, and in some respects it's not really worth teasing out the differences, right? Because we're trying to solve a... understand a problem a customer has, solve it for them, with them, in a way that really created value for them. People who have listened to the podcast before know we've talked about ethnographic research, early in the show, recently we talked about voice of the customer, research in the traditional sense of doing interviews in a very structured manner to uncover the needs, and that was with Gerry Katz and you know, these are all kinds of tools that come together to address this problem of what is the customer dealing with, and how can we shine some light on that and come up with good solutions together?

CHUCK: And Chad, you know the thing I love about design thinking—it is so different than so many other disciplines I've used in the past—is the community has a great openness to use whatever works, so often. And I find this even in some action learning methodologies, you have to use this, it has to be done just this way and we have to do it just so. Whereas design thinking, the attitude when I go in to teach, my hope is after you start using this, you've changed it, you've made it yours, you've brought other tools. I think that's what appeals to me, is that design thinking, you design a multidisciplinary approach, it values anthropologists, it values designers, it values engineers, big data people. It values a lot of these disciplines and creates enough structure so that they can work together, but enough openness so it can adapt quickly to the situation.

[29:46]

CHAD: I love that you highlighted that. It really is an open community and anyone that wants to dive into design thinking that hasn't learned much about it, Stanford D School, they make great free resources available, including workshop facilitation guides, to help you lead your first design thinking session.

CHUCK: Yeah, they have a document called boot camp bootleg, which you can download. It's 88 pages of tools in each of the five steps of design thinking. Jeanne Liedtka at Darden is another source of a lot of knowledge about design thinking. Jeanne's method is geared more for the business community, obviously, she's at Darden Graduate School of Business, and so she has a lot of tools and templates, and again, the community just shares this stuff very openly.

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

CHAD: One other point I want to follow up with is that driver to make this successful. So many times, organizations bring in, like me, as an innovation consultant, or you as a strategy change management consultant. We come and we train them on something, we maybe help them on a project, but it doesn't really infect the organization. It doesn't stick. So, I'm working on ways to change that for what I do, right, that the organization itself has to wrestle through a lot more. What have you seen in terms of design thinking having an effect of mixing through the organization, right, not being oil and water but actually infusing the organization? Or is it still, like one group adopts it and we're lucky if we can get another group to adopt it? What's your experience with that?

[31:21]

CHUCK: Yeah, so that's a great question. I know you're doing something that's very important, and that's creating teaching tools for product management. My philosophy is always to go in with the customer and say, "I want to be useless at the end of this gig. I want you guys to adopt...I want to be a resource for you, and tools, and advice, but I really want you to engage." So in Arlington County, design thinking is in four different departments now, and one of the things that happened after that library story I told you, when the team briefed, what they had done, they were so excited. They were excited for a couple reasons, they accomplished something that obviously was going to be useful, but the mere act of getting out and interviewing people in a deeper sense than the features/functions approach, I think just inspired them. They, at the end of this program, said, "We want to be design thinking champions." So that five-person team now committed and is doing, is going to other departments and helping them launch things they're doing. In this financial services company, after just a year and a half, we've got five different departments using design thinking, and they're starting, they're just starting to feed off of each other, i.e. "Hey, you've done it, what did you learn?" This had been an organization that had been relatively siloed, and so we're actually seeing a bit of a change in the culture, as people are kind of glad to share some of the insights and one of which was this driver insight. I got that from talking to Terry at this financial services company, that she really found that somebody needed to be there, not the consultant, but somebody inside the organization, so sort of say, "Hey guys, let's not go back to our old ways. You can take a risk. Give it a try, and know that if we're not right, we can adapt."

CHAD: I love that they were inspired by the experience. So, this was different for them, it was also fun for them, right? They personally got new insights because of their interaction with people they talked to, inspired from that. And they probably got some new zest, some new enthusiasm for the work they're doing, personally and the work they're doing as part of the library too.

[33:46]

CHUCK: I think you've hit on something very important, that this process is fun. We have fun. We create the environment, which is a key success factor. We do something called stokes when we see the energy low, we get everybody to stand up and do some kind of a crazy activity that seems so silly at the time, but after they sit down, they're just energized and ready to keep moving on.

CHAD: Great. Well, I appreciate you sharing some information, starting with action learning, and about how that fits in—really a powerful framework that appears simple, but really can break through some problems and getting people working on the same page. And if you have a resource for that, I'll link that in the show notes. Do you have something we can share?

TEI 082: Design Thinking and Action Learning for product managers - with Chuck Appleby, PhD

Host: Chad McAllister, PhD

Guest: Chuck Appleby, PhD

CHUCK: Yes, so I will absolutely send you some briefings, and I'll send you some resources on action learning. Probably a book by Mike Marquardt called *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning*, and on design thinking I would say Jeanne Liedtka's book, *Designing for Growth*.

CHAD: Ok, great. So we have both of those covered. This wasn't a discussion about how to really use design thinking, we've done that before, but talking about why organizations are thinking about it, why they adopt it, and some of the outcomes. I love leaving on that note of, you know, it does inspire the participants, the people involved with it too. And, as listeners know, I always like to ask for an innovation quote. What's a quote that you brought to share with us?

CHUCK: Yeah, I think the key skills that you need to make design thinking work and actually all of these four phases we talked about, the ability to ask powerful questions, from different perspectives, to deeply listen to what people are saying, and to really focus on gaining empathy, getting in their shoes and knowing that what you're trying to do is solve their problem, not yours.

CHAD: Very good. Powerful questions, deep listening, and empathizing.

CHUCK: Yes.

CHAD: Wonderful. Chuck, I appreciate your time. Thanks for sharing your experience with us. Listeners, I will add all the information we talked about and the things Chuck sends me for resources for you, in the show notes, too. Thanks, Chuck.

CHUCK: You bet. Thank you, Chad.

[35:53]

CHAD: Thanks for listening and sharing this podcast with other product managers and innovators. I really appreciate it when you do that. Together, we're creating a better-informed product management community and helping everyone out. You can find the notes from the discussion with Chuck, the transcript, and the resources he discussed, at www.theeverydayinnovator.com/082. Please check it out. Keep innovating!