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Frank Tyneski

DESIGNER | INNOVATOR | LEADER | MAKER | SPEAKER / TEACHER

Service | Cinder House Studios

In my current role as owner/founder of Cinder House Studios, a design/experience and innovation firm, I frequently work with clients who have disruptive technologies and help them find their ‘cultural fits.’ Some of our clients are start-ups and the process of design thinking is used to gather valuable insights that lead to moments of truth that can be translated into aspirational views of future opportunities and growth.

Moments of Truth

Finding such ‘moments of truth’ for the likes of LzLabs, Graphene Innovations, Inc and CSN.org relies on creating a culture of intellectual humility within an environment that can unify cross-functional teams and ignite individual effort. Oftentimes, collaborative resources are in different regions with different goals. As a leader, I must bridge these organizational gaps with boldness as well as professional sensitivity.

Portfolio and CV: CinderHouseStudios.com

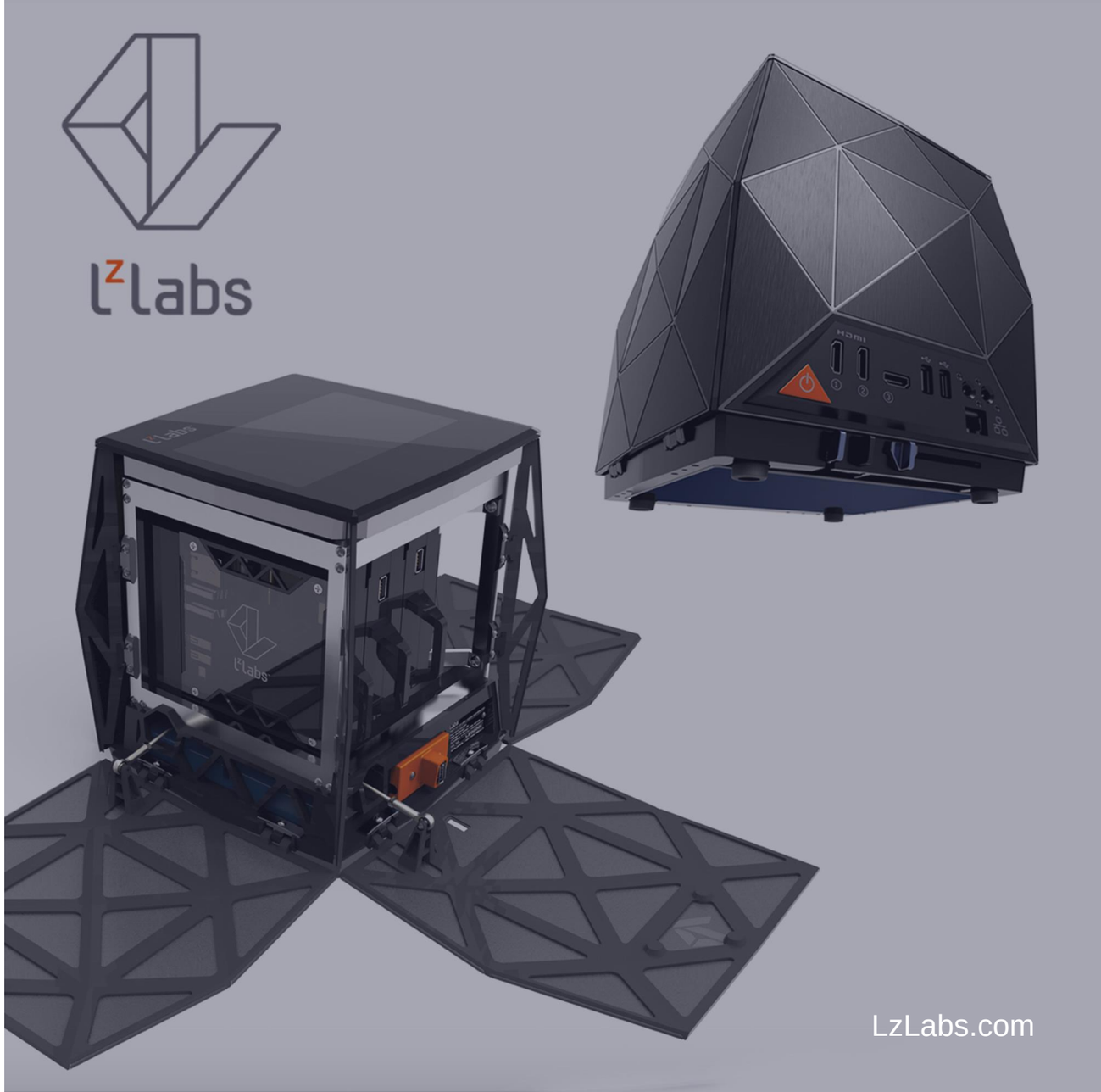
End-to-End Thinking

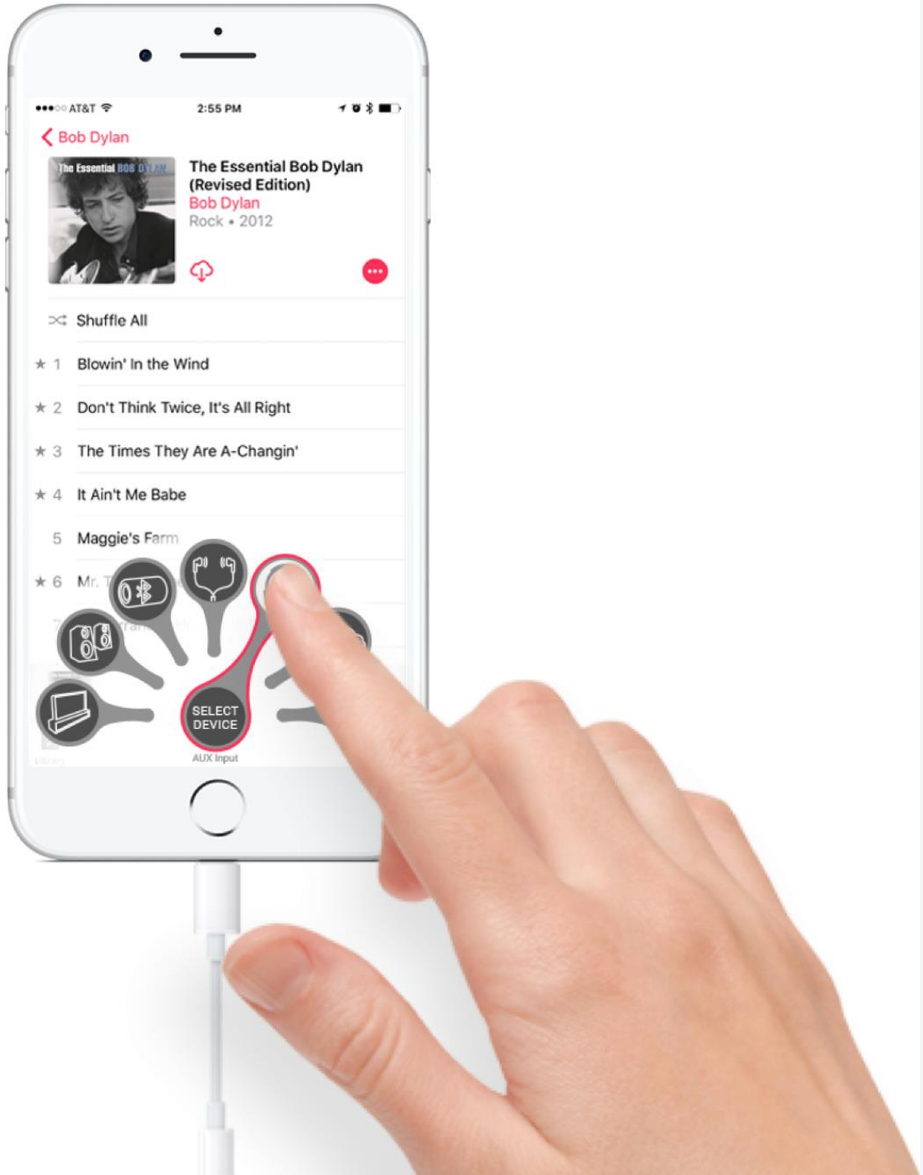
As executive director of ‘the experience design group’ at Dell, I led teams in Austin, Shanghai, Singapore and Taipei. Together, we were responsible for all consumer product design & experience. This included researching and developing design languages for all of Dell’s consumer sub-brands; Alienware, XPS, Inspiron, and Vostro sub-brands and Dell branded soft goods, accessories and peripherals. The consumer product portfolio was large enough to support an average of forty discrete development programs running concurrently and in concert with brand and user experience experts who were working across these brands.

Starting Up

As Chief of Design & CMO for LzLabs in Zurich, Switzerland, vision and story was a primary focus for communicating both the digital and physical breakthroughs that stand to disrupt a $30B industry. A new software platform would be able to ‘lift and shift’ legacy code from the mainframe, which could run compatibly on an open systems architecture and in the Cloud. The image here was meant as proof of concept to give customers an understanding of what the future of moving off the mainframe could look like. Moving to x86 systems & the Cloud would allow legacy brands, like Sears, to compete with ‘born on the Web’ companies like Amazon. The company was branded ‘LzLabs’ and the tagline ‘software defined mainframe’ was trademarked to define a new category and revolution in mainframe computing.

The user experience design would need to bring together two distinctly different user groups - legacy programmers aged 50-60 and young millennial programing wizards - all working together on modern systems. For this product to be successful, both user profiles would have to intuitively flow with a new UI methodology that both could understand. Thankfully, the internal staff served as test subjects from around the globe. Many participants from around the globe joined the journey from theory to working proof of concept.





Customer Journey

The user-centered design approach that I subscribe to leverages work by the psychologist Abraham Maslow and the scholar Joseph Campbell. The process involves mapping the customer's journey. This process can deliver 'Moments of Truth' but recognizing opportunity requires making an authentic connection and, whenever possible, living the problem is most ideal.

A design-thinking methodology is efficiently used to conceive and bring to life new innovative technologies, brands, digital experiences, environments, and businesses to create design solutions that remain fresh, inspired, and relevant.

User Experience

While venturing into the world of Psychoacoustics, the scientific study of sound perception, we discovered that software could hack the brain to improve the way humans perceive sound.

Mobile music integration applications were created and developed for Apple, Amazon Music, Spotify, Pandora, Deezer, Nabster and Tidal. Mobile carrier integrations applications were also created for Veon, Verizon, Direct TV, AT&T, 1&1 and Telefonica.

I created this patented 'Flower UI' as a method quickly select one's audio output device when the device detects a connected audio cable. Once a selection is made, the psychoacoustics software optimizes the audio signal for that output device. The result is a profoundly better audio experience that's richer and more spatial.

If a wireless connection is made, the software automatically optimizes the settings with no user involvement.

Meaningful Work

I’ve found that time spent coaching global design teams has been both professionally rewarding and spiritually fulfilling. And it was second nature having instructed universities courses in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and Mexico City, Mexico while I was working at Motorola. I enjoy giving back to my profession. When offered, I graciously accepted the opportunity to lead the Industrial Designers Society of America, the world’s largest organization for professional designers. My position with the IDSA provided exposure to all the vertical categories of design - transportation, consumer electronics, user experience, housewares, medical, sports and recreations, furniture, fashions, etc.

Building Teams

The ability to connect between disparate teams with different workstyles would prove to be a valuable skill while working at startups. Having an entrepreneurial and global perspective enabled me to broker partnerships between complimentary businesses. While at Skinit, Inc, I leveraged technology partnerships between HP, 3M, PPG and Tech-Faith to develop many new and patentable technologies, specifically in the areas of personalization & customization. The intellectual property generated from these relationships was licensed back to HP. The technologies that I co-created were the basis of the world’s first factory designed for mass customization, located in Suzhou, China. Additionally, I was personally involved in a private equity partnership with ABS Capital to capitalize this effort. We received $60M in capital to grow the business; the company was later acquired.

Surpassing Forecasts

The goal is always to develop an experience that is delightfully relevant to users and profitable to the organization. I believe part of my agenda is to appropriately disrupt the product roadmap before our competitors do. The most commercially notable of my disruptive launches was the first NEXTEL line of products by Motorola and the subsequent birth of a consumer line, TalkAbout two-way radios, which generated $100M within 18 months. Following Motorola, I co-created BlackBerry's SureType interface, which was licensed by T-Mobile within days of developing the first working breadboard. All concept development for the design of the UI/UX was completely supported by engineers who volunteered their personal time toward the vision. The product we developed together grew BlackBerry's annual subscriber base by 4X.

Humanizing Technology

The image on this page is the first generation, Motorola TalkAbout two-way radio concept, which launched an ecosystem of professional-grade, two-way radios that were designed for consumer use. I conceived this new product category while observing and experiencing unmet needs in outdoor active markets, namely hikers, bikers and skiers. I was able to solve my own personal extreme communications needs with military grade radios on loan from Motorola. Much like the radios a ski patrol unit would use, these radios are tools that require training…nothing a consumer could easily use or afford.

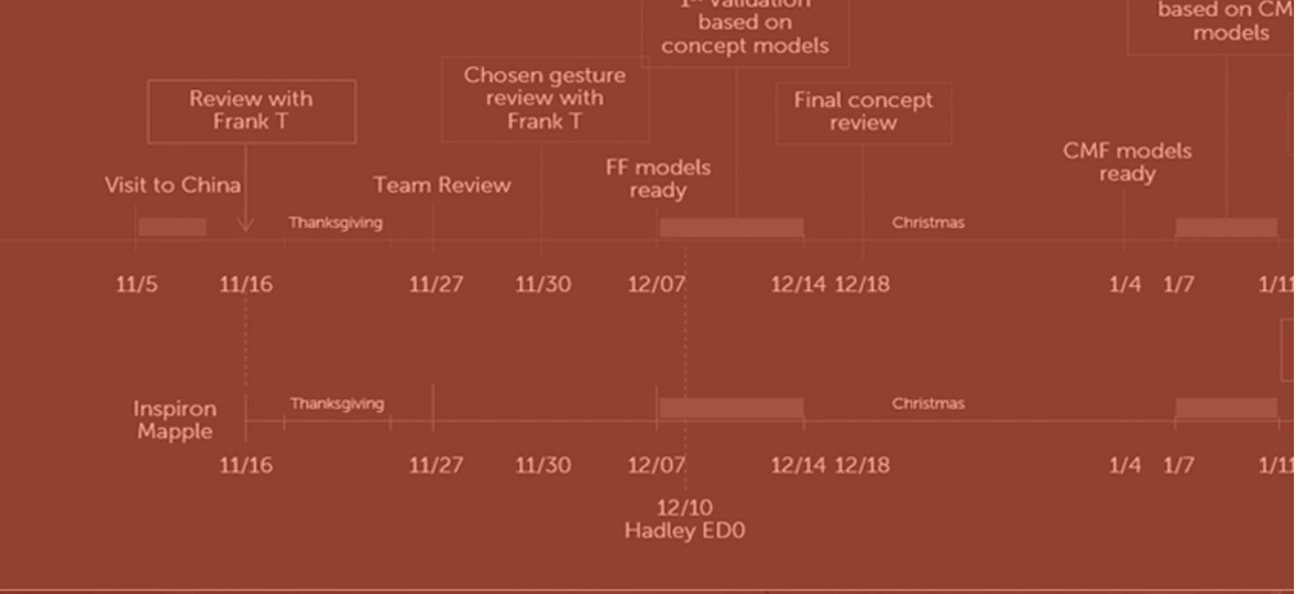
The key to the mass market success of the TalkAbout was humanizing commercial grade gear for different segments. To attract early adopters, a fresh and approachable personality had to be defined, which ultimately became the icon for outdoor active gear. The original design cues still appear on numerus other copycat products in the market today. The design also features center location of the Push-To-Talk (PTT) button, subtly styled to look like a thumb print. This was the first two-way radio to break a long history of locating the push to talk on the side of the device. Motorola had to aggressively defend these design and usability patents. The product was awarded patent of the year in 1998 as well as Design of the Decade by Newsweek magazine.

Digital and Physical Convergence

The hardware paradigm for enterprise users, a waffle sized (PDA) form factor, was no longer enough for sending and receiving email. Enterprise users needed to be liberated to do business on a more stylish and portable phone.

The design theory around the transformation of the BlackBerry was that software and hardware would merge to create a truer man / machine interface. The result was the SureType / 71000 series. This line of BlackBerry's contained a digital and physical interface that combines a traditional mobile telephone keypad with a patented QWERTY-based keyboard. The keyboard is unique in that two letters reside on one shared key, thereby reducing the number of keys required by half. This hardware arrangement would work in concert with the software that contains a list of 35k English words, so when a user types the beginning of a word, the algorithm builds the word from regular QWERTY keystrokes.

BlackBerry was able to license this significant breakthrough in mobile communications. SureType made it possible to reduce the mobile messaging form factor, which created an entirely new category for BlackBerry. SureType is noted for being the first consumer-friendly phone for messaging and email, well before capacitive touch screens were commercially available.



Searching

I find that searching and experimentation, not planning or experience, is what drives the innovation process. To spur innovation, it's important to conduct scalable experiments that are simple and inexpensive. The fidelity of these experiments is scaled up when the results are favorable. In time, the pathway to innovation becomes clear. Ultimately, there is a moment when the future vision is strong enough to suspend disbelief, which snaps everyone into focusing on a common goal. From there, it is easier to collaboratively move through the complexities that exist between where one resides today (point-in-time) and where we want to be in the future.

Building

The model that I had evolved for innovation wasn't always internally contained. A new method for innovation in design, experience would have to be deployed at Kyocera, which maintained a decentralized approach to design. Headquartered in Yokohama, Japan, I worked out of a local office in San Diego, California with product development teams in Bangalore, India. All product manufacturing was outsourced to contract manufacturers in China and Korea. As such, I had to find new ways to coordinate and harness creative energies across the value chain, while concurrently managing globally-located resources. The key to this strategy was building and nurturing designers in Asia who were employed by our contract manufacturers. When treated like an internal valued resource, external team members at the ODM started performing like equity shareholders.

Design Means Business

I kicked off a Design-Thinking course at The University of California, Los Angles (UCLA) in 2018. I wasn't sure there would be enough design-thinking interest from non-designers. Although the mythologies that I teach were founded in products design and development, the same principals apply for gathering insights into all aspects of product, service and experience design categories, not just industrial design.

After a brief learning exercise, MBA students were assembled into small teams. Each team was permitted to select a business category. Topics ranged from autonomous car insurance to recreational cannabis. The disparate mix of business categories gave everyone an opportunity to see how a design-thinking process applies to an array of different products and services.

All students we're able to learn and apply our techniques to find new opportunity zones. Today there is a waiting list to enroll in the next course on 'Psycho-Aesthetics'.

Design Practice

The design program at California State University / Long Beach is among the best in the country. I'm extremely honored to be included in CSULB's comprehensive body of lectures and professional advisors. I enjoy sharing and demonstrating the technical knowledge required for young designers to express their visionary ideas with clarity. A clear benefit of teaching pragmatic skills to young design students, they often inform me on emerging and/or underground trends.

Working with design students inspires me to stay fresh, informed and technically literate. I still love the tools and the methodologies, and I enjoy encouraging the creative problem-solving process, sharing business knowledge and helping students attainment of new skills.

THANK YOU

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