Chapter 12

Connecting business, inclusion and design

Graham Pullin and Martin Bontoft
IDEO London
As consultants to a diversity of businesses, our experience is that it is rare that inclusive design is on the agenda from the outset. Inclusion may be part of the design brief, but more often its importance needs to be negotiated during a project – although increasingly inclusion can be introduced into earlier, more strategic discussions. This paper considers each of these three cases and shows that the ways a connection can be made between business and inclusion can be different in each.

The role of the brief

IDEO is a consultancy with user-centred and innovative design at its heart. Our business is designing products, environments and services, or otherwise bringing our design processes and sensibilities to bear, in order to build our clients’ businesses.

The brief is an important point of contact between our clients’ business needs and our own. For our clients it can define how our contribution will benefit them, against which to weigh their investment in this collaboration. For us, it defines a role that we are confident we can meet, that will deliver real business value and so build a longer relationship.

It is rare that inclusive design is explicitly on the brief from the outset of a project. This short paper considers three different situations:

- when inclusive design is on the brief from the outset (when inclusion is an agenda)
- when inclusive design is not explicitly on the brief (when inclusion is negotiable)
- when inclusion is discussed before the brief (when inclusive design could be a strategy).

The connection between business and inclusion, and ultimately the justification of inclusion in business terms, can be different in each. Therefore, so is the way we are able to reflect back the value of inclusion to our clients.

When inclusive design is in the brief from the outset

The most straightforward case, but also the most uncommon, is when inclusion is an agenda. This tends to happen when the focus of our client’s business is already on a particular sector of the population which (for whatever reason) is more affected by disabilities than most, for example due to the effects of diabetes in the case of insulin injector...