

Change Through Design

You will have noted that we refer frequently to design, design practice and design methodologies. At a time when there is also frequent talk about innovation, entrepreneurship, technology and new business models as the solutions for a better world it is important to consider what is meant by “a better world”. Ultimately this means creating a better quality of life for human beings. We believe this should be for all human and sentient beings and therefore, by necessity and principle, a better planet.

While innovation, entrepreneurship, technology and new business models are important and usually vital components of creating a better world, they are frequently really driven by the desire to build a successful enterprise.

The discipline of design is specifically about creating solutions that improve some aspect of our lives, whether it is better communication, better homes, better products, better experiences or better transportation. Design practitioners use well developed methodologies and practices to ensure that they are answering the right needs, accounting for all the contextual considerations, understanding who they are creating solutions for and how all the critical stakeholders will play a role. Through iterative cycles of research, exploring loosely held ideas, discussing with experts from other relevant disciplines, collaborating with end-users and stakeholders, developing prototypes and validating ideas, design teams can more confidently deliver solutions that will succeed and please customers.

It is important to emphasize that design is not just about making objects look beautiful. The reason that Apple products have been so successful is that their design is so much more than skin deep. The whole experience of buying, understanding, using and handling their laptops, smartphones, watches or operating systems, so that they satisfy the needs, aspirations and delight of their customers, is because a holistic, carefully integrated approach has been taken during their design. The fact that they look great too is significant but that is really only the icing on the cake.

And so it should be for the Futurama 2.0 Vision. We believe that in order to create a network of integrated, effective, sustainable and compelling transportation and mobility solutions for America, it will require the same rigorous, researched, holistic, multi-disciplinary approach that the design discipline assumes as a matter of routine. The best design practices that we advocate do not exclude innovative inputs from business, technology, industry or government – far from it, these must be embraced – but they do ensure that the end results will meet the needs, expectations and aspirations of the customers, while providing compelling opportunities for all, appropriate stakeholders.