So what is **Inclusive Design?**

Inclusive Design (ID) is the forefront of design thinking, and the key to winning the disruption game. But what is it? Dr Manisha Amin the CEO from Centre for Inclusive Design explains.

Inclusive Design… sounds cool. How does it work?

Ok, imagine your boss just gave you an innovation challenge: re-invent the toothbrush.

This challenge comes with a twist. The toothbrush you design has to work for people who can't brush their teeth, because they don't have the right motor skills. In other words, a 'lack of ability' that we typically refer to as a 'disability'.

So you sit down with this tiny niche market, and, through a focused interrogation, come to a deep understanding of their impairment. Through these insights, you realise that the only way they can clean their teeth is with a rotating head, driven by a small, rechargeable electric motor.

Congratulations… you just invented the electric toothbrush.

But did you just devise a highly-specialised and obscure device, useless to all but the 0.0001% of people with tooth-brushing motor-skill disability? No… you've created a mass-market category-killer, with surprise-and-delight customer appeal, fat margins and a big future rich with line-extensions.

The genius of Inclusive Design is that it harnesses the wisdom of the design constraints embodied in disability and disadvantage, and uses them to create breakthrough products, services and customer experiences that then deliver for everyone – across the whole bell curve.

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What can Inclusive Design do to improve customer experience?

It comes down to connecting, consulting and facilitating. We deliver qualitative research that targets often-marginalised customers, and makes meaning out of their stories. We work with clients to develop provocative design constraints. Then we use our expertise in engaging with niche users to facilitate breakthrough innovation in response to those constraints.

With clients, we sit alongside existing innovation, technology and customer experience programs, so we focus on augmenting – not replacing – the initiatives that are already working for an organisation.

Humanity is abundant with differences. Intelligently harnessing these differences helps build smarter, more fun experiences for customers.

Got some examples?

Inclusive Design has been applied to technology-based innovation such a voice activated AI, think Siri or Alexa, or physical based design innovation like Nike's Ease Challenge that saw designers create footwear for all types of athletes.

Facebook video captioning is a technology that was developed for the hearing-impaired, but turns out to be perfect for anyone doing social media on the bus in the morning.

This approach works across product innovation, service design and user experience at any touch point. Like Unilever's work into mobile shopping. Mobile devices are increasingly the e-commerce option for customers. Using inclusive design for insight, Unilever realised a key issue was that customers couldn't see or read product information that was normally printed on the products. They created images and new hero shots with insight from people with low vision so that their customers could identify the size, scent and type of product they were purchasing easily. Simple but with immediate return.

What is the Centre for Inclusive Design working on now?

We do insights through research and white papers. We provide peak body services and partner with government and universities to drive the change agenda we believe in. And we work directly with brands to help them get the most value from Inclusive Design thinking. We work across organisations to bake-in inclusive design, from bias training, to product innovation, customer experience, service design and audits across consumer touchpoints.

What do you think are the key challenges facing senior marketing executives now?

We see hyperpersonalisation, and disruption at speed, while keeping focused on RoI and strategy as a key challenge. But that's not new, just constantly exploding.

What has emerged as a competitive advantage is the wisdom in the long-tail. Todd Rose from Harvard has talked about this in 'The End of Average'. If you're designing products, services or experiences for an 'average' customer, you're basically failing everyone.

Microsoft came to the conclusion that some 80% of its customers experienced some form of impairment in the use of its products. That's a big whack of customer engagement to be missing out on. In response to this, Microsoft is now one of the biggest devotees of Inclusive Design.

What would you say to an organisation looking to apply Inclusive Design?

I was at a conference recently. One of the speakers made the best observation: 'We may live in a digital world, but we have an analogue heart.'

Customers should be in the *lead* – not just at the *centre* – of technology. People should co-create solutions and experiences.

Given that there's no such thing as an average human being, being good at engagement with difference is key to innovating.

At the Centre, we're not only here to improve customer experiences. Our vision is also to eradicate the experience of disability so that everyone can participate in the world we create. That's an exciting – and very profitable – future.

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The winner of the Nike Ease Challenge (https://news.nike.com/news/nike-ease-challenge-winner-announced)

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