

Learning experience of developing a global Bioeconomy platform with Service design methods

Biobord platform is an online platform for Bioeconomy related networking, knowledge sharing and innovation boosting. One of the aims for Biobord platform, is to further develop global networking in the Bioeconomy field, the creation of new workplaces, innovations and communication between businesses.

Introduction to the development of Biobord Platform

Biobord platform was originated as the end result of the RDI2Club -project (Rural RDI milieus in transition towards smart bioeconomy clusters and innovation ecosystems). JAMK (Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences) has a leading role in the project amongst the partners from Norway, Latvia, Estonia and Poland. The RDI2Club project is co-financed with the European Regional Development Fund, Interreg Baltic Sea and it aims towards connecting Bioeconomy developers around the Baltic Sea region.

My role in making Biobord platform has been defining the UX design for the platform as well as the service design. I have also created the marketing materials and the visual brand materials for Biobord. I have an education of Industrial design, however my focus has been more into Service design.

What is service design?

Service design is a user-centered way of planning interactions between humans and companies. The service centers around the users or customers need so they can be fulfilled in the best and most effortless way as possible. Service design shares tools and methods which can be utilized on developing an already existing or a completely new service/product with the goal of making a usable and user-friendly service. With these methods it is possible to make your brand stand out from the rest similar services and leave a positive impact to your ideal users.

Current state of Biobord

Biobord Platform has been in active use since 2020. The piloting phase of creating the platform turned successful and the platform has changed into a better version ever since. Even though the platform has been in well use, it does not mean that the service design thinking stops when the product is out.

The profiling and customer journey mapping -methods turned successful and useful. They have the development of the platforms brands and made realizing different issues with the platform easier.

Feedback is collected quite frequently in multiple ways. Reporting issues such as, errors while using the website, ideas to improve the usability of the website or its content, has been done quite frequently as well

but could be even more easier and approachable. At the moment reporting issues is easier if you're an active user of the forum. This feature could be more visible to all users of the Biobord platform. However, I feel like the brand is visually very visible and Biobord has its services clearly available. Even the platforms content has improved from the start.

What could have been done differently in a Service design viewpoint?

First off, I want to address that I am satisfied with the results, but I have also learned a lot from the service design process of Biobord platform. Besides working on the service design, I have also created marketing materials and designed the visual brand of the platform. Making timetables to fit in all the tasks of the project has been challenging but you learn to prioritize the most important parts of the platform's identity. Planning your work schedule does take time but is important. Sometimes there were a few surprise tasks which came along as the project was going on, but it is important to be flexible and accepting towards yourself and your design.

Journey maps were made on assumptions which can be misleading. This has been taken in note when we were creating journey maps and they are planned to be updated during later stages of Biobord. However, there are some cases which we did not consider in the journey maps at all.

One idea which we could have done in our past workshops is to invite even a wider range of different experts. Our benefit in RDI2Club is that we have a wide range of Bioeconomy experts, but we have only a few experts with the knowledge of user-centered design and marketing. It could have been useful to get more viewpoints from other design experts who have experience on similar projects.

To make our customer journey maps even more comprehensible, we could have used a service design method known as "service blueprint". This method is often used with the customer journey mapping methods. Blueprints give a deeper understanding of the underlying resources and processes which are part of using the service. You can get different perspectives to view the seen and unseen sides of the service. In this case I would have liked to learn more about the differences when it comes to using the platform through a mobile device and compare it to the web view. Our center of attention was in the web version of the platform so in my opinion we should have taken in consideration the profile groups who would like to use the platform more on the mobile.

Afterthoughts of a Service designer

I have realized that my perfectionism sometimes goes into the way of my work. It is a fact that I am still a fresh service designer who graduated in 2018. And it does sometimes make me doubt myself. In the future I will try to put more effort on putting my perfectionism to the side and focus on making even more results without caring about the perfect details.

I have noticed while working with bioeconomy experts that I might have had some very different views from others. Sometimes communicating your views to other experts might be difficult but, in the end, I feel like everyone learned to understand each other. Also, RDI2Club is a global project which adds some cultural **working** differences. Communicating differences might sometimes take time but they have always been worth it.

Overall, I have enjoyed my time in RDI2Club. I know Biobord platform has great future ahead and I wish the best for everyone who I worked with. Now it is my time to move forward to other projects and stand back to see where the platform develops in future.