



Deloitte US: Wicked Problems

Making an impact that matters on pressing social issues

Project details

Origins: Deloitte US launched Wicked Problems at Deloitte University (DU) in Westlake, Texas in October 2014. The purpose of this initiative is to stimulate collective innovation and harness Deloitte professionals' passion to tackle some of the biggest challenges the world faces today, while developing design thinking skills.

Design: Using a crowdstorming approach, Wicked Problems provides a platform for participants to ideate innovative solutions to societal challenges. The initiative is built on empathy-based problem solving methodologies, and follows a disciplined approach comprised of three steps: immersion in the problem, generation of potential ideas to tackle the problem, and advancement of the most promising ideas through collaboration with various non-profits.

Scale: More than 9,000 Deloitte practitioners, mostly from Deloitte US representing all functions and levels, along with hundreds of community members, have participated in Wicked Problems sessions, generating, refining and prototyping thousands of ideas. These ideas are then shared with the non-profit collaborators.

Professional skills: Through Wicked Problems, part of the development curricula at DU, Deloitte professionals strengthen their problem-solving and leadership skills through exposure to an innovative design thinking process.

Case study

Wicked Problems offers a structured process that uses design thinking during a 30 to 90 minute classroom session, in which participants apply their diverse skillsets and passion to some of the biggest challenges the world faces today — complex, urgent, and persistent problems that have no readily apparent solutions. Launched in October 2014 at DU, the initiative provides an opportunity for Deloitte professionals to participate in an empathy-based ideation process alongside their peers. Since its inception, more than 9,000 Deloitte professionals and community members have generated thousands of ideas in support of four major campaigns / topics: Employee Wellness, Diversity and Inclusion in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, Bullying Prevention and Mental Health.

"I'm excited about this program, and the quality of the ideas coming out of it," says Alex Chan, Associate Director, National Strategy, The Clinton Foundation. "The ideas are strong and can be put into practice to help advance what we are trying to achieve at The Clinton Foundation."



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Wicked Problems collaborated with the Clinton Foundation to tackle Employee Wellness. It is estimated that ailing workers cost the American economy US\$153 billion annually. During a three-month period, more than 2,500 Deloitte professionals generated over 700 ideas which were shared with the Clinton Foundation to help advance thinking in the field. From those ideas, the Clinton Foundation chose the top 23 that they deemed the most feasible, scalable and measurable. Among the top 23 ideas is a program that incentivizes workers to focus on wellness and another that focuses on psychological factors, such as improving mental well-being through healthier relationships at work.

“Even as the program evolves, Deloitte will continue to hold true to the original idea,” says Jen Steinmann, Deloitte LLP’s Chief Transformation Officer, and the executive sponsor for the Wicked Problems program. This means giving professionals “an experience where they can gain confidence to push past where they think they can go. When you think about those differentiators for business—courage, optimism, confidence—we can go further than we think we can and we can do that together. That’s where I want Wicked Problems to go,” she says.

Other issues addressed through Wicked Problems include encouraging women and minority participation in STEM fields; bullying prevention in schools and the workplace; and dismantling the stigma and barriers to care associated with mental health.

To include Wicked Problems in your programs, or to learn more, please reach out to [Jainik Shah](#).



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