



Connecting People to Solutions

It's September 2016 - my very first quarter at SCU. I decided to sign up for an entrepreneurship course taught within the School of Engineering. I always had a keen interest in starting a business - just didn't know how. My professor, after pushing us through a round of icebreakers, introduced us to a few entrepreneurship-related facts. The most memorable fact was that most businesses fail because the solution they provide is not fair, affordable, ideal, fun, effective, or efficient for the needs of their customers.

That idea stuck with me. The idea that to ideate, design, and implement a solution effectively, each step must be linked to a user or customer need. And I mean a real need - not assumptions. One of my favorite SCU professors once told me to always write down my assumptions and remember that they are indeed assumptions until proven otherwise. That alone keeps me in check; pitching product ideas off of assumptions of customers or users can be dangerous if they're wrong.

Instead of assumptions, focus on a few simple but critical questions: what is the problem? Who faces this problem? What is our solution? How does our solution differ from what exists? Why would our target customers use our product?

“ Assumptions are indeed assumptions until proven otherwise. ”

“ The more that empathy...is embedded into product development, the more likely...the solution...will be used. ”

As an entrepreneur, designer, and leader, my work *always* depends on questioning, reevaluating, and empathizing with the experiences of customers and end-users. Why? Because the more that empathy, user-testing and research are embedded into product development, the more likely the result will reflect a solution that the target audience will use.

Mariah Manzano '20 Web Design & Computer Engineering
CEO & Co-Founder at Opal | Software Engineer at Cisco