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Design principles - Output

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d e Tech Humanity for Children

Context

The team identified a mistrust in tech and media companies and a lack of design that focuses on the needs of children. Most tech designers and engineers have little child development or parenting background and need advice on creating products that authentically meet families' needs.

Vision and Objectives

Children's screen media and digital technology use have changed dramatically over the past two decades. When most parents were children themselves, children's media was delivered in predictable ways through a small number of channels. Though not all children's media was educational, it was easier for parents to identify the 'junk food' media and set limits around screen time on family televisions and video games.

Then smart technologies and devices arrived. Children can take their favourite shows to the dinner table, the bedroom, or alleviate any moment of boredom. Anyone with a camera can create a video, post it on a major technology platform, and make money from children's advertising impressions. A few channels no longer controlled the distribution of children's media. The vast scale of content development today, means that humans aren't reviewing the content children are offered before they click or download.

In addition, the ad-driven monetization of these new media meant that their goal was to keep users of all ages on devices for as long as possible, with many repeat visits. Children use platforms and apps filled with design tricks to keep them online longer. Parents express more difficulty managing limits on screen time, getting children to sleep, having healthy conversations around the dinner table, and helping children learn and socialize without distractions.

Audience

The primary target audience are tech companies, who will receive suggestions on how to innovate their products and services to make them more child-friendly, thereby increasing and improving the trust parents and families have towards them.

The direct beneficiaries are families – particularly children and their parents and caregivers – who will get a better and more child-friendly and child-centric digital space, where their children will be able to grow and learn in a safe and empowering environment.

By tech companies we mean product and service providers in the tech world, both established and start up. They deliver games, apps, websites, IOT, AI, social networks, or edutainment that directly and indirectly addresses and involves children, including providers of services officially addressing over 14's, over 16's or over 18's but used by children through their parents' devices.

By families we mean parents, children in their early childhood aged 0-8, grandparents and all the relatives and caregivers involved in the growth of the children aged 0-8 present in all families in Abu Dhabi, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, social status, income status and educational level.

Solution

The team has developed a set of 12 design principles that focus on the needs of young children, their parents and how technology companies can create sustainable, trusted relationships with children:

1. Children are seen and recognized as being in digital spaces.
2. Children have a voice and can express themselves within digital spaces.
3. Children are given room to explore, tinker and fail, and use their imagination to generate their responses without being coerced or nudged in different directions.
4. Design has emotional insight and an empathic lens. It helps the child see others' perspectives in rich and meaningful ways.
5. Design processes take into account differences in children's contexts and neurodiversity
6. Children can easily engage and disengage at will (i.e., the design provides natural stoppage points, launching points for play in the physical world) so that children can carry ideas from media into the social and physical world around them.
7. Design has transparent surface cues that naturally teach the child digital literacy skills (e.g., understanding advertising, data collection, algorithms), as they play. Interactive design and algorithms are transparent and fair.
8. Design makes space for the parent to accompany the child and help them make sense of digital experiences, is attractive to adults, and is easy to interact with the child during digital play.
9. Designs of user interfaces (UIs) and setup features are flexible enough to account for diverse parenting approaches and goals (e.g., allowing more or less child autonomy) - but avoids the need for parent heavy-handedness.
10. Parents' need to disengage from technology (work email, social media, mobile gaming) is considered in the design of devices and work policies
11. Long-lasting and sustainable: Child can form a relationship with the technology over time, rather than churning in and out of the marketplace
12. Design is environmentally friendly by default and doesn't take up too much of a carbon footprint unnecessarily (e.g., through ads, data collection)

Design is environmentally friendly by default and doesn't take up too much of a carbon footprint unnecessarily (e.g., through ads, data collection). Design should allow parents to accompany the child and help them make sense of digital experiences, is attractive to adults, and is easy to interact with the child during digital play. Design rarely makes room for the parent or child's context. Platforms that encourage interaction between parents and children strengthen a child's ability to learn from digital media.

Children can form relationships with technology over time, while online advertisements and data collection are minimized or eliminated.

Thank you

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for Children