



Personal Development Plan

Donovan Lewis B1.2



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Introduction

I'm Donovan Lewis. I'm currently a first year student of Industrial Design at the University of Technology Eindhoven. I want that you, as a reader by reading my PDP get an idea about what I have done until now to become a successful designer, as well get a good idea about who I 'am now and who I want to become.

These are the subjects which you can find in this draft showcase that will provide you with enough information to give you a good impression of me.

- My vision on design
- My Identity as a designer
- Reflection on each competency I have developed



My vision

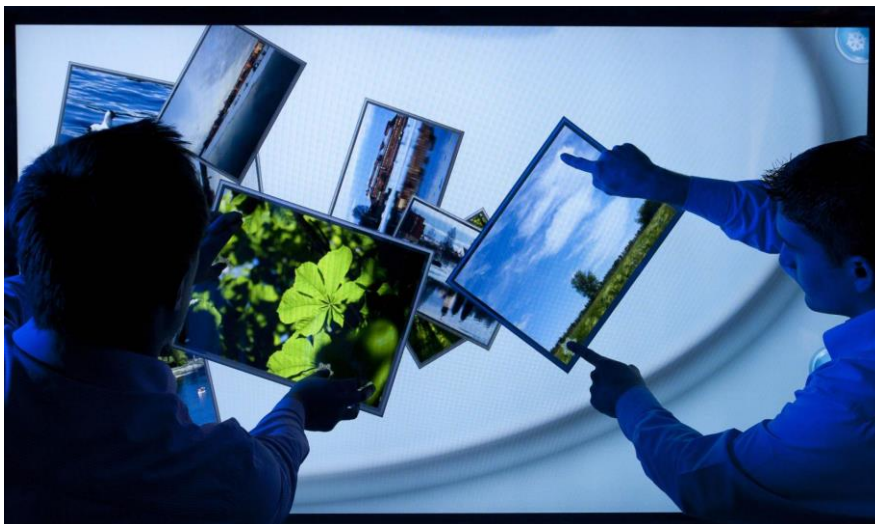
In my vision, I see a world where technology becomes more and more natural in usage and in its presence so it's easier, more fun to use in the day-to-day life and accessible for everyone. A great example of my vision is the multi-touchscreen. The multi-touchscreen is the perfect example of a NUI (Natural User Interface), because it enables user to zoom in or out or rotate objects in two dimensional field with two fingers on a very natural way instead of using onscreen buttons and sliders.



NUI (NATURAL USER INTERFACE)¹

A NUI is the common definition used by designers and developers to refer to a user interface that is effectively invisible, and remains invisible while the user continuously learns increasingly complex interactions.

The word natural is used because most interfaces use artificial control devices which only can be used after some learning. I think also a NUI's are so interesting while the learning curve is short, the user gets continuously the feeling of being successful and that the interaction comes naturally. These are the key-elements I want to focus on in my designs.



¹ Natural User Interface (Wikipedia, 2014)

What I also like to focus on or pay attention to is to enhance today's NUI's because there is always room for improvement. For example, again if we talk about a multi-touchscreen which I want to improve I think that some kind of physical resistance will improve the interface in a more natural way. There will be more resistance when moving big files to another folder to give the user the feeling that the files are heavier than when moving small (light) files. Those are the things I would improve or come up with for product and services.

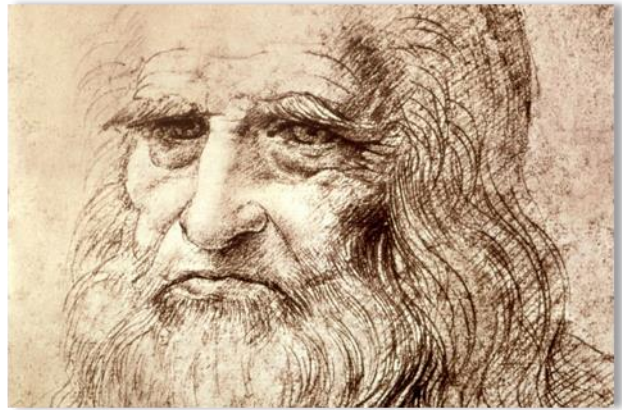
Two other aspects, which I think are important, are the function and aesthetics of a product. A product needs to have a function to be worth making it and it has to be aesthetically correct to be attractive to use. [EXAMPLE]

This is my vision, because I think in a world where there is an increase in using technology to develop smart and interactive products and services it from great importance is that everybody is able to use it with all its possibilities without a long learning curve. By designing products and services which are made use of a clever NUI I want to make my vision come true.



Identity

Leonardo da Vinci is a special man. It is said that he was the most diversely talented person that had ever lived². He was a painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, botanist, and writer. As a designer I want to look like him a bit. Just as him, I also want to know from everything a bit. That's because I find almost everything interesting and I want to be able to understand every aspect of my own products.



For example, I find the business side just as interesting as the electronics side of a project. In short, I want to become sort of a "Leonardo da Vinci" designer, a multidisciplinary thinker. Know from everything something so that you are able to have a good overview of your design which leads to more good decisions. The freedom within this study helps me a lot to decide for myself to do what I want, when I want. That helps me a lot to form my identity as a multidisciplinary thinker.

Working in a team is fun and very helpful. So I want to keep working in the "project" style later in my life. Companies like van Berlo and studio Roosgaarde work exactly in a certain way I also want to work in later in my life. I really want to work on something for some time, but when it is finished I want to do something completely different. For example, when I worked on a project which goes about traffic problems I want the next project to be something with stimulating kids to sport more. It must be something completely different, because that gives me energy. I have to shift my focus again on different things, which give me energy and joy in designing products and services.

I also really like to work in a team. When you work in a team you have far more possibilities because you don't have to do everything by yourself. Also the fact that you have people in your team (if you are working in a good team) with different specialties helps a lot. Someone is very good at programming while someone else is very good at making business models. So in the end you have far more possibilities than if you were working alone.

My role as a "da vinci" designer will be that I have a sort of supervision function, because I know from everything a bit and therefore are able to give feedback on every design branch within a project. I also had some experience with a function like that and I think I'm capable to fulfill such task. That's why I really want to design/work in a team, because you are able to think much bigger than working alone.

² See the quotations from the following authors, in section **Fame and reputation**: Vasari, Boltraffio, Castiglione, "Anonimo" Gaddiano, Berensen, Taine, Fuseli, Rio, Bortolon.

Reflection on competencies

Core competencies

Ideas & concepts (IC)

IC is about developing good ideas and after that a concept by using a variety of creative techniques, such as co-creation, brainstorming and researching. IC is actually a major part of the beginning of the design process. This phase, where you need to choose for a certain concept, I find very difficult because it also means that you need to let go of some concepts which took a lot of time and effort to conceptualize. "Kill your darlings" is a hard thing to do for me.

I have experienced this myself during my assignment and my project. It is hard to decide which one is the most interesting to concept to develop further. I then learned that it is important that everyone on the project team feels comfortable with the decision, because if not it will get difficult to make the next steps in the process because the team members who do not feel comfortable with the concept will more likely not be able to understand certain actions and choices made by others.

I will definitely want to spend more time in this competency next semester and especially in the design phase because during my assignment with Philips I learned that this is the most important phase of the design process and that you need to spend a lot of time in this phase to come up with a good concept. Something I haven't done with my last project.

Integrating technology (IT)

This competency is about integrating and using intelligent systems in the whole design process. This is an important competency because with integrating technology you can make intelligent and smart designs.

After the introduction lecture about IT I immediately bought an Arduino, because I was curious about the possibilities of this micro controller. I think it's important to have some knowledge and skills about the Arduino, because they are small, powerful, cheap, relatively easy to program and therefore great to integrate in your prototypes.

I started with powering LED's and controlling them in different ways, because we were going to use that in our project and I was curious what an Arduino was capable of. In the end I wrote a program code which controlled the LED's in our project. This was quite hard to do, because a nice fading effect is hard to program. But with calculus (using a sine function to describe the brightness over time) I was able to program the nice fading effect I wanted.

I developed this competency quite well this semester because I was responsible for the prototype of our project which involved some basic electronics. So I have no plans to develop this competency even more next semester. I think it is more important to focus on the other competencies which I did not develop this semester.

User Focus & Perspective (UFP)

UFP is all about observing and getting to know the needs of your potential user to make a good user-focused design. You need to do field research and communicate a lot with your user to get the information you need to get to know your user and his/her or their needs. Only then you are able to make good designs.

During the last semester I did not focus very much on this competency. In my next project I want to do much more on UFP by involving the end user more in the design process somehow, right from the beginning.

Social Culture Awareness (SCA)

SCA is something which you need to take into account during the whole design process. Things like design, art, history, social trends and sustainability are very important factors which can influence your design greatly.

I haven't developed this competency this semester because my teammate was focusing on this part of the project. But I have already developed a bit of awareness in this competency in high-school by following the subject art history. The many different art styles which we discussed gave me some insights in why things are being built in some specific way or how certain events influenced ideas

A good example is Unité d'Habitation designed by Le Corbusier. This is a building where people can live, work and relax. That means that you can find apartments, shops, offices, recreation facilities and more in the same building. This idea about having everything you need in one building failed because people did not get the feeling that they don't have their own space because public shops and the places were located in the same building. It resulted that many of them moved. This is the reason that architects were frightened to try this concept again. This causes that people become aware of the fact that you actually need to separate work, home and recreation to live happily. This wouldn't happen if they did not try it out.

Coming semester I want to become more aware of SCA by also researching the social trends which are linked to my next project.

Design Business Processes (DBP)

Designing products and services is relatively easy in comparison with actually putting them on the global market and making them successful and profitable due to a good business plan. DBP is about combining the two to come to good designs. There are certain tools, for example the business canvas model or a stakeholder map which can help you in this process.

I have already developed quite some awareness in this competency. I learned very much from my old job where I worked as a salesman. Because the company was very small I also had a lot of contact with the financial department where I learned a lot about why companies sometimes decide to sell or not sell certain products. I used this experience to look from a more business view to my projects than a designer view to see if the product is interesting enough to invest in.

Besides that I started with my assignment Corporate Entrepreneurship and Design (DG516) because I think that is of great importance to learn how to get people to invest into your project if you want that your project is going to be big and successful. Also I want to learn more about designing for a real company and everything what it takes to do this good.

All in all I think it is not necessary to focus on this competency coming semester.

Form & Senses (FS)

This is a competency about the actual look, feel, taste, smell or sound of your product or service. This is the part where the designer decides what kind of sense or experience he or she wants to trigger by the end user. This causes that you have to make a lot of "prototypes" in the different senses to decide which combination of "prototypes" is the best combination.

I immediately start to make some first sketches which were related to my project. I did this for my project but also to develop my sketching skills. After I made some sketches I choose some of them and used them as reference material when I made some 3D-models in SolidWorks. It helped me to communicate with others about the idea and the concept, because I think the images tell also a great part of the story. Also the lecture about FS taught me that you need to "make" or have things related to your concept to experience your concept and your designs you made yourself. This is to get a better feeling about the concept

With that in the back of my mind I started with our prototype for our project. I started with experimenting with materials. How do they look and how do they feel were question which I tried to answer. After that I spoke with an expert about what his thoughts were on my design and what the best way is to make it. After each iteration that I made, I discussed this with my coach to get feedback so I could improve the design.

I learned a lot about prototyping by doing this, for example that by doing and by trying out some different ideas about your prototype you will find a proper solution to make your prototype or find the proper materials you need.

I don't want to focus on FS coming time, because I think I made some great progress in developing this competency last semester.

Meta competencies

Teamwork & Communication (TC)

TC is important. Not only in the context of the design process is this important, but it is also important for you as a person. Your whole life you need to work with other people and discuss and present things to get things properly done. Also a professional attitude is needed to have a good impression on people so they believe that you are serious about your business so they have a good feeling while working with or for you.

During my first project I had some difficulties regarding with teamwork and communication. Certain team members didn't show up, didn't finish their work on time or didn't do their work properly. This resulted in that I did too much work in the end, because I did much of their work again. After a discussion with my coach I realized that I need to give some responsibilities out of hands and just focus on my own responsibilities and own work.

This was first very hard, but after some time it became a more natural and especially relaxing way of working which I want to continue during next projects which involve teamwork.

I learned that at some moments it's best to set goals for yourself beside the goals you have set with the team to be able to make some progress with the project even if the teamwork is not there. Planning moments to discuss with the team about why things aren't going as planned is also solution which can improve the teamwork. We discussed things which were going wrong and how to improve them.

Next time when I encounter problems with teamwork I will sooner show this to my team members and discuss this to improve the situation.

Design & Research Processes (DRP)

Where most of the competencies are about a single part of the design process, this competency is about the process itself. Plan, perform and reflect are besides research and reasoning (explaining the choices you made with good argumentation) the key elements of this competency.

What I learned is that the design process is not static but a dynamic process. After each step you look back and ask yourself if it was the right step. If it wasn't the right step you go back and do it over. It could also happen that you go several steps back at once if it's necessary. This only works well if you reflect good on the decisions you made.

There was a point in our project where we looked back and reflected on our decisions to determine if we made the right choices and if we were still right on track. I learned much from that moment because it was new for me to look back to determine if we were on track.

So in the future I want to look back after each milestone and not after we got stuck in the design process. A design schedule which is based on a continuous and steady flow of deliverables will help me to develop DRP.

Self-Directed & Continuous Learning (SDL)

SDL is about ASK. ASK which stands for attitude, skill and knowledge is very important in this study, because this study is based on the fact that you are a proactive (attitude) designer which keeps on developing his skills and knowledge to be always up to date with your designs.

I expected that it was difficult to be a proactive designer because I was used to the fact that people told you what to do to become better in something. But it turned out not to be that hard. I am very interested in everything, I just want to do everything. I don't need to be proactive because I am already a quite proactive person.

The next semester I want to focus on the knowledge part. I want to know more details about different things for example the use of different colors or very important designs which changed a lot in the design world and/or our day-to-day world.

Descriptive & Mathematical Modeling (DMM)

The competency DMM is about using mathematical models and certain mathematics in your research and designs.

I thought that DDM was going to be a difficult competency, because the course calculus was part of DMM and calculus was a difficult course.

Although I passed calculus I didn't feel the need to apply DDM on my project. I didn't find any good opportunity to apply these skills in a project until now. Maybe it's due to the fact that I am currently have a project in the Nano Supermarket which is more about conceptual thinking and so relatively speculative.

In the future, I need to look for opportunities or create opportunities to be able to apply these skills of this competency.

Smart Goals

IC

- Try more creative approaches in the beginning of the project
- Create at least two concepts which are interesting enough and worth developing
- Discuss the concept after every iteration.

UFP

- Do three user test/user observations to gain knowledge about the user and or to develop the concept further.
- Do research about the users.
- Make a persona.

SCA

- Research trends by attending the assignment Trends Cockpit.
- Write a reflection about SCA within our project.
- Find 5 "things" I like and dislike during the Milano study trip and describe why I like it or not.

TC

- Reflect on the differences in teamwork compared with my former team.

SDL

- Start thinking on what I want to do after my bachelor and what I need to do for that.