



Stanford eCorner

Solve Only Real Problems

Julie Zhuo, *Facebook*

November 30, 2016

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/4697/Solve-Only-Real-Problems>

Facebook's vice president of product design, Julie Zhuo, talks about how a problem's importance can be gauged by first looking for supporting evidence. This helps prioritize people's limited time and energy on solutions for their audience, as opposed to focusing on problems based on self-interest, Zhuo explains. "The question to ask is, 'Is this a problem that is worth solving?'" she says.



Transcript

- So now the second question is, well how do we know this is a real problem? And by know, I mean, well, what evidence do we have, right? Is there qualitative evidence that it is, is there quantitative evidence that we can look at? And I highlight the word real, not because, you know, I think that there are fake problems, but just because I think the question to ask is, is this a problem that is worth solving? All of us have limited time, energy, resources, money, whatever, to be able to devote our being to trying to solve problems. What makes this one the one that we should pick out of the thousands or millions of problems that are out there? And so this question is really about just making sure that the opportunity is something that is worth tackling, and that we aren't just solving problems for ourselves individually, but that we actually are very aware of the problems that the audience that we're building for is facing. So for the example of groups, I wanna talk about, I wanna find other people who are interested in discussing the same things as I am. The way that we try to validate whether or not this was a big enough use case was of course, we went and we talked to a lot of people, but we also looked at some of the data that we had. So when we designed the group's product, to start with, we imagined that most of the time, you would get invited to the group. So I might start a book club and I'm gonna invite some of my friends who like reading the same books as me, and that's how we're all gonna know about the group. So in our initial formulation of groups, it was really all about being invited by somebody else who was already a part of this group. But one of the things actually that some of the engineers on our groups team had hacked over the years was this little unit called groups you should join. And so some of you guys might have seen it, sometimes you are scrolling through your feed and this little story will pop up and, based on what your friends have joined and groups in your community, and groups that are similar to things that we think you might be interested in, you'll see some recommendations, and you can go and explore them and decide to join them if you want. And we thought that this was just a small feature, but really, most of the inviting was gonna happen through the normal invite process.

But when we took a look at the data, what we found was that actually a third of group memberships were starting to happen via this little groups you should join unit, which meant that there actually was a need and a desire already using the tools that we currently had, that people wanted to find things that they weren't explicitly being invited to, that there were examples of all sorts of things that they wanted to be able to participate in and see that they just weren't getting connected to any other way. So this was, I think, good evidence for us, that if we wanted to devote something, a larger solution to helping people discover groups, that that was a worthwhile endeavor.