Merrion Square: A Design Thinking Case Study

Image by Ben Keenan via Flickr

Background

Merrion Square is a striking Georgian Square and public park located very close to the centre of Dublin, surrounded by attractions such as The Natural History Museum, The National Gallery, and numerous creative organisations and businesses.

The Process

36 stakeholders from Ireland's greatest cultural and hospitality establishments formed the Merrion Square Innovation Network (MSIN) to collaborate and develop the Square into a new, thriving destination for tourists and locals. Fáilte Ireland provided the innovation training that would empower each MSIN member to think not just as an individual business or organisation, but as a collective.

Design Thinking workshops were held to teach the skills and forge the connections needed to build a fresh approach. Customers were invited to allow the MSIN to effectively empathise and communicate, generating ideas that would resonate and have the greatest impact.

The workshops involved proven methods such as creating personas and ideation. Professionals from a range of different industries joined to give alternative perspectives on the Square's potential and history. The prototypes formed helped the MSIN gain vital funding and support from other bodies when each team took the opportunity to present theirs at The National Concert Hall.

Outcomes

Since 2012, the activities around Merrion Square have been ongoing.The MSIN actively organised or facilitated some activities, such as World Street Performing Championships and holiday events on St Patrick's Day, Halloween, and Christmas.

The success of this project created a renewed interest from other organisations, with the City Council providing a free wifi zone, 'Supper on the Square' hosting dinners in some of the historic buildings, and an outdoor cinema company screening classic movies in the park.

The square and surrounding area continues to be a bustling hub of activity.

Source: Collaboration and Creativity: A case study of how design thinking created a cultural cluster in Dublin (P. Robbins, F. Devitt, G. Millar, M. King) 2014