

On Empathy, and Not Feeling It

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Recently Tracy was asked whether a plan to have everyone in the office go about their day with an “impairment” would be a good way to “practice empathy” and learn more about assistive technology usage. Her response was that while wearing prosthetics demonstrates the shock of becoming impaired, it is questionable what it reveals about living a full life with an impairment. “Empathy” is getting around, especially in the worlds of design thinking, start-ups, and technology. But in these varied contexts, what does empathy really mean? Such questions led us to explore empathy as a method, attribute, and commodity, in turn raising more questions. When we generate and spread “empathy,” are we participating in creating a veneer of care that obscures tensions between consumers and businesses, and ultimately, value extraction? If so, can we improve how we inspire the corporate imagination, and the ends to which that imagination is applied?

Please visit epicpeople.org to view a full-length video of this Pecha Kucha.



IMAGE CREDIT: bagogames

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