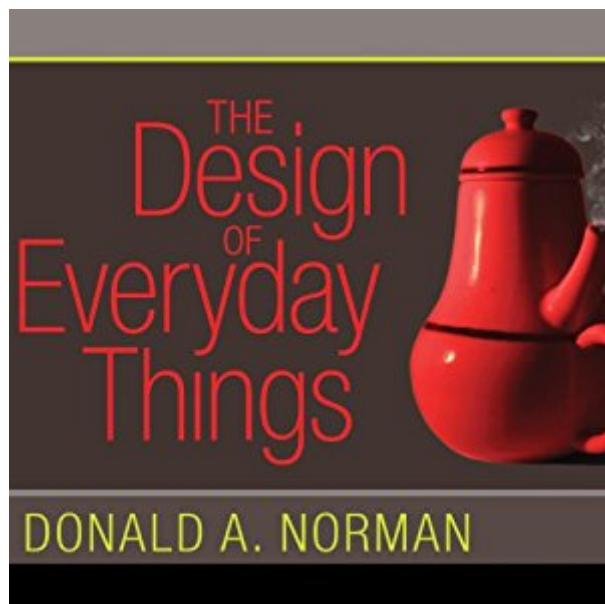


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The Design Of Everyday Things



Synopsis

First, businesses discovered quality as a key competitive edge; next came science. Now, Donald A. Norman, former Director of the Institute for Cognitive Science at the University of California, reveals how smart design is the new frontier. *The Design of Everyday Things* is a powerful primer on how - and why - some products satisfy customers while others only frustrate them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The book condition and seller were great. The book itself provided great perspective and challenges the reader to look at everyday things from a good/bad design point of view. Norman also gives design guidelines (e.g., natural mappings, visibility, feedback etc) that the reader can focus on an implement when designing. The book was not so good in terms of organization and consistency. Ironically the book is about good design, but the layout is lacking. First level headings are in Initial caps and aligned right, while second level headings are in all caps and aligned left. Third level headings are also all caps (with smaller font size) and aligned left. In general, I believe all caps are thought to be "bigger" and should be the first level headings and second level headings should use initial caps and third level should use initial caps and italics. I think this, at least now, is a typical cultural convention as well. If I saw only an outline of the book with all the different headings, I think the organization could be improved. In terms of consistency, throughout the book he talks about design principles, things to keep in mind, and evaluates items back to his ideal design elements. However, that list isn't described consistently. In the 2002 preface (p.xi) the list of design principles

include: conceptual models, feedback, constraints, and affordances. On p.4 Norman introduces the principle of visibility. On p.23 Norman introduces the principle of mapping. Visibility and mapping are related to conceptual models, but should not be identified as a "principle" or should have been included in the list of principles on p.xi. Norman defines his credo on p.36 for errors, which is great, but, in my opinion, should be included as a design principle. Throughout the book Norman gives examples and relates the design to the principles he's outlined, but only to some of them and not all. To improve this read, I would recommend: (1) revise the organization and layout; a good and "symmetrical" outline would greatly improve readability and would better convey the "conceptual model" of Norman's message, (2) revise the formatting of the heading levels, (3) formulate a complete list of design principles at the beginning of the book, (4) for each example, evaluate the design with respect to all of the design principles, not just some of them

This is essential and timeless reading for any designer. It's tough to get through, ironically because it's a book about usability and accessibility in design and it's just oceans upon oceans of text. But Donald Norman is brilliant and the ideas are sound. Consider that the original book was written long before the internet and that the revised edition in the late 90's or early 00's hadn't really gone out of date. The principles are still completely relevant and not dependent on fads or changing technology. If you are an artist, industrial designer, graphic designer, tech industry professional, or just a curious human, read this book. Don't let the Norman door hit you on the way out. (What does that even mean? Well, read the book and find out!)

I'm always interesting in why things get designed a certain way and Dr. Norman gives some insights on the why things should or shouldn't be designed. It's a good exploration on the user experience of product design and give great examples of bad (and funny) design.

The key point for me was this: if somebody has trouble using your design, it is not because they are dumb--it is because you did not design it very well. This is, of course, a gross oversimplification, and there is a design language presented in this book that goes way beyond this. But I think this concept alone should make people pause for a moment and think. Remember that time you pushed or pulled on the door when the opposite force should've been applied? You weren't having a brain fart--it was a poorly designed door interface. It could have and should have been better.

Great text

This is great book. To be fair I only purchased it because I had to read it for class, but I decided to keep it because I found it to be an incredible eye opener as an Engineer. This book does a great job of doing exactly what it's titled "the design of everyday things." It has some really laughable moment when explaining that one of his friends gets stuck in a door way. If you're not an engineer but you're any type of designer, you'll get an appreciation for this a well.

The Design of Everyday Things is a close look at how humans interact with the design of everyday objects. Not so much about designs themselves, but the psychology of why things should be designed certain ways to accommodate how people approach them and are trained to operate them. The original title of the book was The Psychology of Everyday Things, and is probably a more accurate title. However, if that sort of things interests you, as it does me, it's still a valuable and interesting read. The examples cited and used to illustrate concepts aren't exactly modern, but they get the point across.

I was expecting a book that provided general guidelines on how to design, but once I started reading I realized that it explains in detail the different aspects that influence the way we interact with the world and with the objects around us (such as how memory works and how we learn from the environment). The main message I got out of it is that a good design should serve men and allow us to use that object in the most natural and "human" and intuitive way without having to look at a manual! I also learned a lot about psychology; I know I will go back to this book from time to time.

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