[PDF] The Design Of Sites: Patterns For Creating Winning Web Sites (2nd Edition)

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Description:

About the Author

Douglas K. van Duyne, entrepreneur and software designer, is cofounder and a principal of Naviscent, a Web research and design firm. He has been an innovator in customer-centered design,

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Four years ago, we began this book with a story of a man who discovers a talking dog. When asked what the dog said, the man replied, "Who cares? It's a talking dog!" For several years after its inception in the early 1990s, the Web was the talking dog, fascinating in its very existence. Then businesspeople discovered that they could sell things using the Web, without paying the huge production and distribution fees that print and television advertising required. Web sites became commercial ventures almost overnight, and a period of rapid evolution began for this new medium. As the Web evolved, the problems faced by its developers were the same ones faced by any industry as it matures: people started to care more about factors like value, convenience, and ease of use than about the novelty of the technology itself. A new term, *customer-centered design,* was coined in an attempt to deal with this change in priorities.

For Douglas van Duyne, James Landay, and Jason Hong, customer-centered design wasn't always a hot topic for e-business. Eight years ago, when we were an entrepreneur with a software design background, a Berkeley computer science professor, and a doctoral graduate student, we had a vision to provide much-needed customer insights to businesses developing for the new medium of the Web. Although the vision eventually resulted in a thriving Web development business and this book, we had many questions to answer along the way. As part of our research into why most Web sites failed to meet customer expectations, we became very interested in how typical design agencies went about their work, and why companies hired outside Web site design firms instead of creating sites themselves.

To help answer these questions, we sent researchers to interview Web designers and their clients. We learned that companies hired design agencies on the basis of their previous work building recognizable brands. At the time, Web designers distinguished themselves through awards and accolades, not by measured success with real customers. This pattern began to make sense only when we learned that most Web designers got into the business after working in print, film, or television, all noninteractive media. At that time, few tools existed to help designers understand the Web customer experience. In fact, when we studied a new client's site, we could see that the business was suffering, but now we knew it was because of the original designer's blindness to the distinctions of interaction design, along with a tradition that often put form over function.

This scenario became clear in our daily work. We were brought in to assess tough site design problems and fix them. We saw client after client with site designs that were failing, even though all the essentials appeared to be in place. During one such project, when we were testing a client's large-scale e-commerce site, we asked typical site visitors to locate a specific product. Our client had designed the site internally and their designers knew how to find everything, so they were confident that customers could do the same. To the test subjects, however, the product descriptions were cryptic, the navigation controls were unclear, and trying to find a single product resulted in pages

and pages of choices. Upon completion of the test, almost all the participants reported success, but in actuality, only a scant few had found the correct product. A site design that was clear to its designers was so confusing to the customers that they did not even know they had failed. As a result of our efforts, the client was able to see that the site had been designed in a vacuum. Only through iterative design and rigorous testing were we able to create a site that was as usable as it was attractive.

Well, a funny thing has happened since those early years. Customer-centered design has risen from obscurity to the forefront of Web site development. During that time, we have used the research tools and methodologies that we developed to iteratively design sites for some of the best-known and best-managed companies in the world. Each in our own way, we've followed our original vision. **Douglas K. van Duyne,** entrepreneur and software designer, is a founder and principal of Naviscent, a Web research and design firm. **James A. Landay** is a professor of computer science at the University of Washington and previously served as the director of Intel Research Seattle, which focuses on the new world of ubiquitous computing. **Jason I. Hong** is a computer science professor at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute of Carnegie Mellon University.

In these roles we have personally met with hundreds of executives to talk about their business models, market strategies, and, of course, Web site development plans. We have found that as Web businesses have matured, organizations have realized the need to focus on improving the customer experience. In fact, we have discovered that the more senior the executive we speak with is, the clearer the mandate for a customer-centered design approach becomes.

This focus on customer-centered design is not limited to our experience. Recently e-business analysts have started evaluating design firms less on their brand design work, concentrating more on the efficacy of their Web customer experience. However, despite the new standards, reviews of top design firms have shown surprising results. Although many of the biggest Web agencies promise to include customer testing as part of their site design services, analysis has concluded their designs do not consistently provide a better customer experience. 1 Much progress is still needed.

Today companies seem to have an almost unquenchable thirst for customer-centered design knowledge, expertise, methodologies, and work practices. The purpose of this book is to help satisfy some of that need, drawing on our years of experience at Naviscent, UC Berkeley, the University of Washington, and Carnegie Mellon, and working on Web research and design projects for more than three hundred clients. We hope that, by keeping the book current with the state of customer-centered Web design as it exists today, we can do our part to ensure that the evolution of the medium continues unabated.

New in the Second Edition

After publication of the first edition, we met and talked with many readers and instructors about their use of the book. A couple of consistent threads of conversation led us to embark on this second edition. One thing people appreciated in the first edition was the breadth of topics in one place. But, it seemed, we managed to miss a couple of important patterns here and there. Readers helped us by suggesting patterns we didn't include in the first edition, like PROGRESS BAR (H13).

Another important factor that influenced the content of this new edition was the development of two important new Web technologies: AJAX-based interfaces and Mobile Web. With AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript And XML), interaction techniques previously available only in desktop applications, such as direct manipulation, could now be used to design enhanced Web sites and applications, broadening designer choices. As mobile phone usage has continued to climb, phone browser technology has improved. The Mobile Web creates new opportunities for businesses, and new design

challenges. Several new patterns in this edition cover the Mobile Web space.

In addition to the many new patterns in this edition, we've updated other patterns to reflect these technology changes, as well as to provide additional insights that we've learned along the way. In fact, more than one-third of the content of this second edition of the book is either new or updated.

Why Use This Book?

You're probably wondering how this book is any different from the numerous other Web design books out there. This unique book is not about programming or any specific technology. Nor is it a quick fix for all of the problems you and your team will face in developing a Web site. No single book can do that. What this book does offer are principles, processes, and patterns to help you develop successful customer-centered Web sites. With this customer-centered focus, your Web site can be relevant, self-explanatory, and easy to use.

Creating a Web site is easy. Creating a successful Web site that provides a winning experience for your target audience is another story, and that's what this book is about. And when you're finished reading it, it will be a valuable reference tool to keep on your desk. You can turn to it again and again as you design, redesign, and evaluate sites.

Your target customers 2 will differ. Depending on your business, they might be members in a club, students of a university, concerned citizens, or paying shoppers. The goals of each of these audiences will also vary, but the challenge for you is the same: creating an interactive interface that provides tangible value to the people who go to your site.

The patterns in this book provide you and your team with a common language to articulate an infinite variety of Web designs. We developed the language because we saw people solving the same design problems over and over at great time and expense. The patterns examine solutions to these problems. We present the best practices from our consulting experience, our research experience, and our Web development experience—gathered in one place. In *The Design of Sites,* we give you the tools to understand your customers better, help you design sites that your customers will find effective and easy to use, shorten your development schedules, and reduce maintenance costs.

If you do not have "customers," think of *target audiences.* One focus of the book is the design of e-commerce Web sites; however, you can successfully apply the majority of the content to make any Web site better.

Who Should Read This Book?

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