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Sketching User Experiences: Getting The Design Right And The Right Design (Interactive Technologies)



Synopsis

Sketching User Experiences approaches design and design thinking as something distinct that needs to be better understood – by both designers and the people with whom they need to work – in order to achieve success with new products and systems. So while the focus is on design, the approach is holistic. Hence, the book speaks to designers, usability specialists, the HCI community, product managers, and business executives. There is an emphasis on balancing the back-end concern with usability and engineering excellence (getting the design right) with an up-front investment in sketching and ideation (getting the right design). Overall, the objective is to build the notion of informed design: molding emerging technology into a form that serves our society and reflects its values. Grounded in both practice and scientific research, Bill Buxton's engaging work aims to spark the imagination while encouraging the use of new techniques, breathing new life into user experience design. Covers sketching and early prototyping design methods suitable for dynamic product capabilities: cell phones that communicate with each other and other embedded systems, "smart" appliances, and things you only imagine in your dreams. Thorough coverage of the design sketching method which helps easily build experience prototypes without the effort of engineering prototypes which are difficult to abandon. Reaches out to a range of designers, including user interface designers, industrial designers, software engineers, usability engineers, product managers, and others. Full of case studies, examples, exercises, and projects, and access to video clips that demonstrate the principles and methods.

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Customer Reviews

"Bill Buxton and I share a common belief that design leadership together with technical leadership drives innovation. Sketching, prototyping, and design are essential parts of the process we use to create new products. Bill Buxton brings design leadership and creativity to Microsoft. Through his thought-provoking personal examples he is inspiring others to better understand the role of design in their own companies." --Bill Gates, Chairman, Microsoft "Informed design is essential. While it might seem that Bill Buxton is exaggerating or kidding with this bold assertion, neither is the case. In an impeccably argued and sumptuously illustrated book, design star Buxton convinces us that design simply must be integrated into the heart of business." --Roger Martin, Dean, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto "Design is explained, with the means and manner for successes and failures illuminated by engaging stories, true examples and personal anecdotes. In Sketching User Experiences, Bill Buxton clarifies the processes and skills of design from sketching to experience modeling, in a lively and informative style that is rich with stories and full of his own heart and enthusiasm. At the start we are lost in mountain snows and northern seas, but by the end we are equipped with a deep understanding of the tools of creative design." --Bill Moggridge, Cofounder of IDEO and author of Designing Interactions "I love this book. There are very few resources available that see across and through all of the disciplines involved in developing great experiences. This is complex stuff and Buxton's work is both informed and insightful. He shares the work in an intimate manner that engages the reader and you will find yourself nodding with agreement, and smiling at the poignant relevance of his examples." --Alistair Hamilton, Symbol Technologies, NY "Like any secret society, the design community has its strange rituals and initiation procedures. Bill opens up the mysteries of the magical process of design, taking us through a land in which story telling, orange squeezers, the Wizard of Oz, I-pods, avalanche avoidance, bicycle suspension sketching, and faking it are all points on the design pilgrim's journey. There are lots of ideas and techniques in this book to feed good design and transform the way we think about creating useful stuff." --Peter Gabriel

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There is almost a fervor in the way that new products, with their rich and dynamic interfaces, are being released to the public—typically promising to make lives easier, solve the most difficult of problems, and maybe even make the world a better place. The reality is that few survive, much less deliver on their promise. The folly? An absence of design, and an over-reliance on technology alone as the solution.

We need design. But design as described here depends on different skillsets—each essential, but on their own, none sufficient. In this rich ecology, designers are faced with new challenges—challenges that build on, rather than replace, existing skills and practice.

Sketching User Experiences approaches design and design thinking as something distinct that needs to be better understood—by both designers and the people with whom they need to work—in order to achieve success with new products and systems. So while the focus is on design, the approach is holistic. Hence, the book speaks to designers, usability specialists, the HCI

community, product managers, and business executives. There is an emphasis on balancing the back-end concern with usability and engineering excellence (getting the design right) with an up-front investment in sketching and ideation (getting the right design). Overall, the objective is to build the notion of informed design: molding emerging technology into a form that serves our society and reflects its values. Grounded in both practice and scientific research, Bill Buxton's engaging work aims to spark the imagination while encouraging the use of new techniques, breathing new life into user experience design.

- Covers sketching and early prototyping design methods suitable for dynamic product capabilities: cell phones that communicate with each other and other embedded systems, "smart" appliances, and things you only imagine in your dreams;
- Thorough coverage of the design sketching method which helps easily build experience prototypes without the effort of engineering prototypes which are difficult to abandon;
- Reaches out to a range of designers, including user interface designers, industrial designers, software engineers, usability engineers, product managers, and others;
- Full of case studies, examples, exercises, and projects, and access to video clips (www.mkp.com/sketching) that demonstrate the principles and methods.

About the Author Trained as a musician, Bill Buxton began using computers over thirty years ago in his art. This early experience, both in the studio and on stage, helped develop a deep appreciation of both the positive and negative aspects of technology and its impact. This increasingly drew him into both design and research, with a very strong emphasis on interaction and the human aspects of technology. He first came to prominence for his work at the University of Toronto on digital musical instruments and the novel interfaces that they employed. This work in the late 70s gained the attention of Xerox PARC, where Buxton participated in pioneering work in collaborative work, interaction techniques and ubiquitous computing. He then went on to become Chief Scientist of SGI and Alias|Wavefront, where he had the opportunity to work with some of the top film makers and industrial designers in the world. He is now a principal researcher at Microsoft Corp., where he splits his time between research and helping make design a fundamental pillar of the corporate culture.

My interest is the user experience in web applications. The author makes some good points, but it would appear he never took the time to read his own writing. Typos, grammar and some illogical points really detract from the reading experience. While he implies that this is all relevant to web design, he takes his time tying it in, whereas he makes his point most often with the design of physical objects like bicycles and iPods that are hard to relate to web design.

I tried the preview version first, and I decided not to buy it - but then again, I accidentally bought it anyway. Well, the reason why I didn't want to buy it in the first place is that although this may be a great book, it isn't so great when it becomes an eBook. One of the reasons why I first decided to buy this book is because of the beautiful layout and pictures. The contents were of course good, but it was the beauty of this book that made me actually want to buy it. However, these are all gone when it becomes an eBook:(aww. So if you want to buy this book, I recommend you buy it in print.

This book compiles lots of famous examples from the 1970s and 80s about building just enough of a product to give an idea of how a person would use it and feel about it. The computer programming conferences I go to are full of thinly copied examples from this book. I walked away with a better understanding of how to have a conversation with a person and figure out the symbols they would understand, and how to quickly produce a variety of sketches using that symbol language, so we can talk about a web site and imagine in vivid detail what it is like to use it without having to build it first. Lots of drawings and clever visual tricks using computer monitors or junk. This is not a book on where to put the navigation on a web site so that users can find it. In that sense, it is not the UX book I wanted. It is more about how to think through and test a variety of ideas about a web site so you can arrive at a design a user loves before you start coding. The recommendation on the UW senior level UX Design class is to read this book and do 5 sketches a week of a web page or product. Improve existing ones or sketch new imaginary products. That is a valuable exercise with a good book. My work has improved because I read this and did plenty of sketches. Worth every penny.

I believe in refreshing knowledge and one way to do that is to see what others are doing and keeping up with. The text book is great and covers many aspects that anyone getting into UX should know. I would also say that anyone that has been doing this for a long time will also be able to sharpen their saw and remember what we are focusing on.

This is a compelling book. It manages to blend business, organizational and design thinking on the user experience. In doing this, Bill Buxton makes the case for (i) the centrality of design in driving business value and (ii) the importance of investing in the design process. The importance of exploration and play in design is called out, and the role of making multiple light, inexpensive sketches of alternatives as an important part of the design process. Buxton also brings together the separate histories of the industrial design (the people who make things) and the software design

worlds, sprinkling in some lessons from film making for good measure. And he reinforces the importance of knowing the traditions and their high points if you want to innovate. All of these lessons are vital to our collective future. I liked this book enough to buy copies for people on my design and business teams, and I will probably give my copy to my boss. I may get a copy for my son as well, who is involved in furniture design in Vancouver. The book does have a couple of weaknesses. The most serious is that Bill seems to think that people don't sketch in code. I am pretty sure that this is not what he thinks - he has seen plenty of people sketch in code and most of the code created by university researchers is a form of sketch - branching code that explores, plays and demonstrates possibilities. The book can also be read as advocating a waterfall process rather than something more agile. One reason may be that he is focused on the design of interactive objects and environments where there are high production costs. But this kind of waterfall approach is not all that useful for people (such as myself) who are building businesses around the delivery of software as a service. And taking Bill's own advice, and looking out a few years, it seems likely that most of us will have 3D printers in our homes and that eventually these 3D printers will be able to print 3D programmable objects. With shape memory plastics and other such smart materials, one of the things with behaviours (interactions) may even be the shape itself. Still an important book, and one that points to more thinking and more learning. The gallery of important user experience sketches is worth deep study.

This is by no means intended to slight Buxton's brilliance, his research, or his efforts, but merely to warn readers that this book relies heavily on decades-old examples of prototyping that have long ago been made irrelevant by modern software and tools. (The advent of 3D printing alone renders many of these examples useless.) There is still some good advice on how to perceive or approach the effort of prototyping, but information of the same quality can be found across the web without having to slog through a fairly dense recounting of old anecdotes. As a usability professional and UX practitioner, I respect Buxton very much, but I cannot recommend this book as essential reading. (Note: this is in reference to the 2007 edition.)

A must have for the UX library!

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