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Revised and expanded edition

The Ultimate Guide to Human-Centered Design by Donald Norman explores the concept that poor design is not a reflection of our cognitive abilities but rather a product of neglecting user needs and psychological principles in design. The book highlights common pitfalls such as ambiguous controls, arbitrary relationships, and lack of feedback, emphasizing the importance of making things visible, exploiting natural relationships, and utilizing constraints to guide users effortlessly. Norman's primer delves into why some products satisfy customers while others frustrate them, serving as a powerful guide for designers. As the director of The Design Lab at University of California, San Diego, Norman is renowned for his expertise in design, usability engineering, cognitive science, and shaping the development of cognitive systems engineering. He co-founded the Nielsen Norman Group with Jakob Nielsen and holds positions such as IDEO fellow, IIT Institute of Design trustee, Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science at University of California, San Diego, and Distinguished Visiting Professor at Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST). Norman's work advocates for user-centered design, emphasizing the importance of technological innovation in product development. His website, JND (just-noticeable difference), symbolizes his mission to make a positive impact. A person can intuitively know how to use products due to perfect design, and they tend to look at design from a usability aspect after enlightenment. The current way of advertising and marketing ignores this and focuses on simplicity and jingles instead. It is appealing when products are both functional and aesthetically pleasing. Reverse engineering shows what makes something appealing and can help understand one's personality. Big Data and AI might make individualization possible, but it raises concerns about consumerism. You think the book "The Design of Everyday Things" is overhyped for software engineers, but that doesn't mean it's bad. It actually made you rethink everyday objects in a good way, like sink faucets even blew your mind. The book's about design and how people interact with things, not specifically about making software. It's more like a reminder to think about how people use the stuff we make. While it didn't change your outlook on designing software as much as you expected, it's still very informative and enjoyable. It's astounding how poorly designed some everyday things are. Norman highlights this issue by sharing disturbing statistics about the number of instructions we're expected to remember on a daily basis. With around 30,000 different sets to recall, it's staggering that we can absorb and adapt to these conventions over time. However, when redesigns go awry, it becomes infuriating. Consider how much more complex life has become since this book was written in the late 80's - pre-Internet era, before browsers, email scams, viruses, etc. While some examples may seem dated, such as VCRs, they're still relatable due to their multifunctional switches and confusing menus that have carried over into modern devices. Phone systems and stoves are also prime examples of subpar design. It's unacceptable that after a century, stoves still require us to read or puzzle out symbols just to operate the burners correctly. Even the most basic tasks can be frustrating due to poor design. As I was reading this book, real-life events demonstrated its relevance - Steve Jobs' success wasn't about inventing new things but rather timing and design. Microsoft's tablet failed due to hardware limitations and a poorly designed user interface. Amazon's Kindle, on the other hand, succeeded because of its well-designed interface and support system. Design is a crucial yet often misunderstood concept that affects every aspect of our lives. Norman's book opened my eyes to the importance of intuitive design, making me realize how much I didn't know. It's still a topic I'm learning about, but it has definitely changed my perspective on the world. The author of "Design of Everyday Things" and a former Apple VP emphasizes that good design should cater to a larger segment of the population, including those in their 60s who may not be considered "cool" but have the money and time. The book is more focused on knowledge than enjoyment, with dry and textbook-like writing, and many abstract concepts. However, it has several important ideas, such as design being about focusing on people's needs and abilities, finding the root cause of problems, and using an iterative process. The book also highlights that good design is invisible, while bad design is noticeable, and that we are all designers in our own way, deliberately designing our lives and workarounds to overcome flaws in existing devices. Key characteristics of good design include discoverability and understanding, making it possible for users to figure out what actions are possible and how to perform them. Despite feeling a little unfocused and repetitive, the book is worth reading for its valuable insights into design principles. Things are created with a purpose in mind - whether it's the setup of furniture, pathways in nature, or the inner workings of gadgets - all were designed by someone at some point. Not everything physical is involved; services, classes, rules, and organizational systems don't have tangible parts but their functionality needs to be planned out sometimes informally other times precisely recorded. A human-centered approach to design means starting with a good grasp of people's needs that the thing being made is supposed to meet. This understanding usually comes from observation because often people themselves are not aware of their true needs or challenges they face. Getting the details right about what something should be is one of the hardest parts, so much so that the principle is to avoid defining the problem for as long as possible but instead keep trying different approaches. This process involves testing ideas quickly and after each test modifying both the approach and how the problem is defined. The result can be items that truly satisfy people's needs. Systems should provide help and assistance instead of displaying error messages. Humans naturally make mistakes, and system design should account for this. The term "human error" should be replaced with communication and interaction. This is because what we consider an error is often a result of poor communication or interaction. Designers should focus on creating systems that cater to human needs, not just machine requirements. This involves incorporating seven fundamental principles: discoverability, feedback, conceptual model, affordances, signifiers, mappings, and constraints. These principles aim to make interactions with systems intuitive and user-friendly. When errors occur, the system should be redesigned to minimize or eliminate such mistakes. If multiple people experience similar problems, it may indicate a deeper issue in the design. A well-designed system should not induce users to make errors; rather, it should guide them towards accurate actions. By focusing on human-centered design, systems can become more user-friendly and reduce errors. The design of machines still requires precision, despite being well-known that it can lead to devastating consequences if done incorrectly. The rules in many industries are written with legal compliance in mind rather than understanding the actual work requirements, making it difficult for workers to complete their tasks. Good designers don't start by trying to solve the given problem but instead try to understand the real issues at hand. According to Don Norman's Law of Product Development, a product development process is always behind schedule and over budget from the start. Skilled designers are adaptable and can quickly learn to work on various projects across different domains because the fundamental principles of designing for people remain the same. However, most innovations take decades to move from concept to commercial success, with many failing completely. The book "Don't Make Me Think" has been praised by some as a classic in the field of design, but others find it boring and lacking in usable principles. The overall tone can be off-putting, making it difficult for some readers to finish the book. Despite its reputation, the text falls short of being a comprehensive guide to effective UI design. I struggled to stay engaged with the book due to its numerous shortcomings. As someone who appreciates design, sociology, and pop science, I was expecting a comprehensive and insightful read. However, the book failed to deliver on these fronts. One potential reason for my disengagement was the inclusion of illustrations in the audiobook format. While they did clarify some concepts, they didn't significantly enhance my understanding of the text. Additionally, the book relied heavily on abstract descriptions and made-up terms, which detracted from its overall clarity. The book's dated content was another significant issue. The author's observations on outdated technology, such as VCRs and DOS computers, felt more like nostalgic ramblings than relevant commentary. Furthermore, many of his design principles were poorly explained or lacked concrete examples, making it difficult to apply them in practice. Despite its initial promise, the book failed to impress me due to its numerous flaws. Its dense, wordy writing style made it feel overly long-winded, and many of its concepts felt like common sense rather than innovative insights. Ultimately, I wouldn't recommend this book to others, as it lacks the substance and relevance that I expect from a foundational work in the field of design. I still recall reading this book on user-centered design, but I must admit that I didn't fully immerse myself in its content; skimming the essential parts was more like it for me. July 14, 2008My initial attempt at diving into 'The Design of Everyday Things' ended in disappointment, so perhaps another try will yield better results. Notably, I found the book's formatting to be somewhat jarring - the use of line-broken headings and excessive italics caught my attention for all the wrong reasons.February 19, 2019The Design of Everyday Things' is a thought-provoking exploration of common objects that we interact with daily. Donald Norman invites readers to reexamine these everyday items through a methodical lens, posing an intriguing question: what makes an object well-designed versus poorly designed? However, the book itself falls short in its design; Norman's discussion is inconsistent and often lacks systematization. He occasionally provides examples of both good and bad designs but frequently focuses solely on the latter. Suggestions for improved designs are scarce, and the section headings can be vague or obscure - think 'Memory is Knowledge in the Head' or 'Using Sound for Visibility.' Moreover, explanatory images are rarely placed alongside the relevant text, forcing readers to constantly flip back and forth. The book's typesetting is awkward, a design flaw that Norman himself seeks to expose. On a positive note, he demonstrates a genuine passion for his subject matter and writes engagingly when not delving into complex psychological concepts. Design, as a topic, is indeed captivating; its relevance extends to every aspect of life, and the subject itself is rich in detail. Norman also excels at uncovering intriguing tangents - applying design principles to toys like Legos or analyzing possible Tic-Tac-Toe scenarios. I found myself in agreement with his core philosophy: that function should trump features and usability should take precedence over aesthetics. He also argues that confusion often stems from poor design rather than user error, a stance he supports with detailed examples. Norman's pro-humanity approach is striking, especially considering the book's focus on objects. This irony only adds to the book's interest. After all, 'The Design of Everyday Things' is a poorly designed study of design dealing with mundane subjects that fascinate.Edition 2/19/2019August 6, 2007Have you ever found yourself standing in front of a door or microwave, completely perplexed because it offered no clear indication on how to operate it? If so (or even if not), this book is for you. In plain, yet incisive language, Norman exposes the glaring flaws in everyday object design that make our lives more inconvenient, miserable, and sometimes hazardous. The book is more than just a scathing critique of designers' laziness and hostility towards consumers; it's also a call to action. We shouldn't have to live in a world where appliances seem to be conspiring against us. Us should not feel like idiots when encountering issues with design. When we struggle to figure out what to do or how things work, it's not our fault. The problem lies with the designer who didn't consider the user's needs. The book argues for change in a field where aesthetics often take precedence over usability and functionality. It's a call to recognize the consequences of poor design and to prioritize the user experience. The text feels like a corporate self-help manual rather than popular non-fiction, possibly due to its intended audience. It provides practical workplace material for designers but lacks interesting content for casual readers, bringing up ethical issues without offering satisfactory answers. The book's central principles are presented as apolitical, encouraging designs for diverse users, but this is viewed through a functional lens that prioritizes effectiveness and profitability. The author fails to condemn planned obsolescence, which raises questions about the true intentions of "human-centered design". It seems to prioritize market penetration over actual human needs, leaving readers wondering if humans are supposed to benefit from this philosophy or just be focus-grouped for profit. This book is a classic in its field but may feel outdated due to dated examples. The author highlights the importance of designing products with user-friendliness in mind. Norman effectively argues that manufacturers are often at fault for creating products that are difficult to use, and it's up to them to find ways to make their designs more intuitive. The book offers valuable insights into techniques for embedding knowledge within objects themselves, which is a crucial aspect of user-experience design. What I found most useful was Norman's fresh approach to everyday objects, examining how people interact with them and seeking to improve the experience. This perspective has inspired me to adopt a similar approach in my own work. This book is an excellent resource for anyone interested in design or user-experience. It provides a comprehensive overview of the field, covering topics such as the importance of considering human factors in product design, the role of feedback in usability, and the value of simplicity in design. The author's writing style is engaging and accessible, making the book enjoyable to read even for those without a background in design or technology. The concepts presented are timeless, and the book remains relevant despite being written over 30 years ago. While some may find certain sections repetitive or slow-paced, the author's enthusiasm and passion for his subject matter shine through, making the book an enjoyable and informative read. Overall, I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in design, technology, or user-experience. Despite its age, "what the title promises" delivers timeless principles that enhance usability and design. Norman explores various everyday objects, seeking to understand how they work well or poorly. The book's accessibility and humor make it an enjoyable read for anyone involved in design, technology, or spaces. Despite some stylistic issues, the observations and recommendations remain relevant 25 years later. The book is filled with valuable insights that can benefit anyone looking to launch a career in design, product development, marketing, or technology. If you put these ideas into practice, you'll be able to create better products that have a real impact on people's lives. The author shares his thoughts on how poorly designed devices can be frustrating and even lead to accidents. He uses the example of "Norman doors" with no visible handles or hinges, making it difficult to operate them. He also talks about the challenges of using everyday objects like thermostats in cars and houses. Although some of his views were outdated due to the lack of smartphones and the internet at the time, he still managed to spot some issues that have become relevant over time, such as feature creep and the importance of addressing underlying design problems. The book also showcases well-designed products and explains how they evolved over time. Finally, the author emphasizes the need to boycott poorly designed products, but acknowledges that our choices are limited due to the many options available. I'm driving a car with an automatic transmission; I don't need a tachometer because I can hear the engine revving & know when to shift. It would be nice if my vehicle had temperature & oil gauges instead of just one idiot light that warns me of any problem - but mine's useless right now since the gas gauge sending unit is busted, so I use the trip meter to keep track of fuel levels. I bought an OBDII scanner to occasionally check for issues since the warning light isn't reliable. I recently listened to a book about design thinking & its application in everyday life. While it was well-narrated, audio might not be the best format as some readers may prefer looking back over sections or visualizing images included with the text. The author presents many valuable ideas worth considering. The book's content includes: * The psychopathology of everyday things * Psychology of everyday actions * Knowledge in the head & the world * Knowing what to do: constraints, discoverability & feedback * Human error? No, bad design * Design thinking * Design in the business world I reviewed an earlier edition of this book (paper version from 1990), which I believe is similar to 'The Psychology of Everyday Things' (1988). The author changed the title for publication purposes. This isn't the latest edition; a revised & updated version was released in 2013. Note: Reviewer comments about A.J. Withers, Robyn Maynard, and Rachel da Silveira Gorman's work have been omitted from this paraphrased text as they seem unrelated to the main content of the original post. She serves as the lead developer for an innovative undergraduate program focused on addressing health disparities within racialized communities, while also holding a certificate in Mad Studies and Critical Mental Health. As a multifaceted artist and activist, she brings expertise to various fields including fine arts, cultural studies, social movements, disability aesthetics, and ideological critique.

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