The Design of Sites: Patterns, Principles, and Processes for Crafting a Customer-Centered Web Experience

By Douglas K. van Duyne, James A. Landay, Jason I. Hong

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

"Stop reinventing the wheel every time you design a Web site! *The Design of Sites* helps you rethink your Web sites in terms of genres and patterns. Once you have identified the patterns and applied the best practices for those patterns as outlined in this book, you will reduce your design effort by 50 percent... at least!"

—**PAWAN R. VORA**, Vice President, Information Architecture, Seurat Company

"The content in *The Design of Sites* could make a novice into a seasoned professional over a weekend. Many companies pay a fortune for the information contained in the book's primary chapters."

—**JOHN CILIO**, Global marketing manager for the Web site of a leading international supplier of computer hardware, software, and services

"This book has many handy checklists for what you should and should not do in creating a conventional Web site. Just following the authors' suggestions would put your site in the top few percent for readability and usability."

—**JEF RASKIN**, Creator of the Macintosh computer and author of *The Humane Interface*

"Now that *The Design of Sites* has made its appearance, we won't have to put up with those poorly designed Web pages. These authors have captured patterns from successful Web designers, including their own experience in consulting and teaching, and have made this information accessible to all of us. The book is readable yet full of worthwhile information—a valuable addition to any Web designer's bookshelf."

—**LINDA RISING**, Independent consultant and author of *The Patterns Handbook*, *The Pattern Almanac 2000*, and *Design Patterns in Communications Software*

"The Design of Sites bridges the gap from theory to practice and makes it possible for people in the Web-design space to use user-centered design principles in their work—without having to undertake extensive training."

—**MAYA VENKATRAMAN**, Human interface engineer, Sun Microsystems

"The coverage in *The Design of Sites* is excellent—issues go beyond the traditional 'design the best page' focus and do a good job of showing the context. I haven't seen any other book with the kind of breadth this has."

—**TERRY WINOGRAD**, Professor of Computer Science, Stanford University, and editor of *Bringing Design to Software*

"Just following the authors' suggestions would put your site in the top few percent for readability and usability."

Jef Raskin, creator of the Macintosh computer and author of *The Humane Interface*

Creating a Web site is easy. Creating a well-crafted Web site that provides a winning experience for your audience and enhances your profitability is another matter. It takes research, skill, experience, and careful thought to build a site that maximizes retention and repeat visits.

The authors of *The Design of Sites* have done much of the research for you. Based on extensive investigation and analysis of more than a hundred high-quality Web sites, this book distills the principles and best practices that make sites enjoyable to visit and an asset to the organizations they serve. This comprehensive resource features a complete set of design patterns that offers proven solutions to common Web design problems. These patterns are applicable to a wide variety of site genres and address every aspect of Web site design, from navigation and content management to e-commerce and site performance. In addition to enhancing the usefulness and quality of your site, these patterns will shorten development cycles and reduce maintenance costs.

Whether you are involved in building a site for business, government, education, or entertainment, *The Design of Sites* will help you focus on the needs and expectations of your customers and give you the tools you need to create a satisfying and effective Web site.

About the Author

Douglas van Duyne is senior director of customer experience products and design at Keynote Systems, the worldwide leader in Web performance measurement and management systems. He was the cofounder, president, and CEO of NetRaker, a leader in customer experience management solutions, prior to NetRaker's acquisition by Keynote in April 2004. Doug has more than twenty years of entrepreneurial, management, and software design experience.

Doug's management experience includes positions at GO Corporation, an early portable computing developer, and software product design at KidSoft, a pioneering e-commerce company before the advent of Web-based shopping. As principal of Dune Design Group, Inc., he consulted on major Web site design projects for Intel, Safeway, Cooking.com, and healthshop.com.

Doug studied computer science, physics, visual arts, and music at the University of California, Berkeley, and he has a B. S. in computer science.

James A. Landay is a professor of computer science at the University of California, Berkeley, where he teaches courses in human-computer interaction. He is also the CTO and cofounder of NetRaker.

Jason I. Hong is a researcher at the University of California, Berkeley. He has worked at IBM Research, Fuji Xerox Palo Alto Laboratories, and Xerox Research, and is a consultant for eDealFinder.com.

You are 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 is 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[1] 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?

This book is written for anyone involved in the design and implementation of a Web site. Its focus is tilted more toward Web design professionals, such as interaction designers, usability engineers, information architects, and visual designers. But this book is also written to be a resource for anyone on a Web development team, from business executives to advertising managers to software developers to content editors. The best possible team will understand and buy into the customer-centered design philosophy because every person on the team influences how the Web site is shaped and formed.

Web Design Professionals * Start with Chapters 1 and 2 to understand the motivation for customer-centered design and the patterns approach to Web design. If you already have a strong background in the principles (Chapters 3 and 4) and processes (Chapter 5) of customer-centered design, you can skim these chapters and move quickly to the patterns themselves (Part II of the book). If you have less experience, the three chapters on customer-centered design and development (3 through 5) should prove useful for whatever kind of Web site you're developing.

Business Managers * Read Chapters 1 through 5 to understand the business consequences of ignoring customer-centered design, as well as to learn the principles and processes required to build a customer-centered site. E-commerce sites pose the greatest risk of project failure. These chapters show techniques you can use to reduce this risk, decrease feature creep, and minimize implementation and maintenance costs. Customer-centered design will also help you shorten development schedules and increase overall customer satisfaction--and consequently client satisfaction too.

Business Clients * If you are the client who funds development of a Web site, read the first five chapters. Because you are paying, you will be especially interested in why there is such an urgent need for a strong customer focus, and in what steps design teams can take to ensure that your customers' needs are met. You will see why these steps will actually reduce your costs and give you happier, more loyal customers.

Benefits of Using *The Design of Sites*

We know that improving your customers' Web experience will take more than reading this book. The principles, processes, and patterns in this book are not a magic solution to your problems. However, by putting them into practice in the design and evaluation of your Web sites, you will improve the overall customer experience. Success requires an extreme focus on customer needs, but one that will pay off in the long run. Your work will result in improved customer satisfaction, a balanced approach to Web design, and incremental improvement of design practices, as described in the sections that follow.

Improved Customer Satisfaction * By focusing on your customers throughout the development process, you will discover their needs, design Web sites for those needs, and evaluate your designs to ensure that those needs are met. You will test your site iteratively with representative customers to make certain that you work out the majority of problems before they cause serious problems and before they become expensive to fix. Customer-centered design concentrates on making sure that you're building the right features on your Web site, and that you're building those features right!

A Balanced Approach to Web Design * Too many books read like ancient scripture, as in, "Thou shalt do this" and "Thou shalt not do that." Such approaches are too dogmatic for Web design, which needs to be flexible and adaptable to a wide range of situations. The Web has led to more customer diversity, as well as a wider range of customer goals and tasks than was commonly seen in the past. We acknowledge, however, that customer needs must also be balanced with your business goals, usability requirements, aesthetics, and technological constraints.

That's why we have aimed for general principles, processes, and patterns that can be applied to many Web site genres. We have integrated the three in one book because each is part of a comprehensive solution: The patterns provide a language for building Web sites; the principles and processes provide instructions for how to use the language.

Incremental Improvement of Design Practices * It is unlikely that anyone has time to read and put into practice an entire book about designing customer-centered Web sites in a short period of time. So we have divided this book into many small, digestible parts. The first five chapters describe the key ideas behind customer-centered design. The rest of the book is devoted to Web design patterns that can be applied to practically any Web site. You can skip around, mix and match, skim, and sample what you need. This is not a book that you must read from cover to cover.

The ideas in this book do not require wholesale adoption. You can take small parts at a time and try them out to see what works for you. In fact, we encourage many small steps instead of a few big leaps because it takes time to become practiced in the many ideas presented here. For example, you could improve your design practices by using the design patterns that make up the bulk of this book. Or you could use just some of the techniques described in the first part of the book, such as observing some representative customers using your site. Though often a humbling process, making such observations will help ground your intuitions of the way your customers think, and in the long run improve the overall design of your site.

Conventions Used in This Book

The following typographical conventions are used in this book:

- Web pages and Web sites that we reference are set in blue text.
- Pattern names are identified as follows:

   PATTERN NAME (A2)

   where the letter in parentheses represents the pattern group and the number is the pattern number. In this case "A2" means the second pattern in pattern group A. Each use of a pattern in the text is also accompanied by a color-coded, circular icon in the margin (as illustrated to the right of the pattern name example above). The color indicates the pattern group. These icons are also shown on each page of the respective pattern.

- Chapter and pattern group names are also represented in the book by color-coded icons. The first five chapters use square icons with the chapter number inside the square, and the pattern groups use diamond-shaped icons with the group letter inside the diamond. For example, in the margin here are the icons associated with Chapter 1 and Pattern Group C, respectively. Throughout the book, such icons are shown in the margin of the text wherever a specific chapter or pattern group is mentioned.
- HTML tags and code examples are set in constant-width type.

Disclaimer

We use many screen shots of Web sites in this book to illustrate examples of good and not so good design. We offer kudos to the Web teams and companies that made the good designs. However, the examples of not so good design should not be construed as attacks on the Web sites in question or the companies responsible for those sites. Wrestling the technological, economic, and organizational beasts can be quite an endeavor, and change can be slow, even in Internet time. Besides, we are all still learning. We are all in this together.

We Would Like to Hear from You

Please send us your comments, questions, and any errata. Although we cannot update your copy, we will organize your feedback at http://www.designofsites.com/feedback/.

We are especially interested in finding out how well particular patterns worked for you and hearing your suggestions for improving them. We plan to share new patterns that you have ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Luz Davis:

This The Design of Sites: Patterns, Principles, and Processes for Crafting a Customer-Centered Web Experience are reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The reason why of this The Design of Sites: Patterns, Principles, and Processes for Crafting a Customer-Centered Web Experience can be one of the great books you must have is actually giving you more than just simple examining food but feed you with information that possibly will shock your preceding knowledge. This book is usually handy, you can bring it everywhere you go and whenever your conditions in e-book and printed ones. Beside that

this The Design of Sites: Patterns, Principles, and Processes for Crafting a Customer-Centered Web Experience giving you an enormous of experience for example rich vocabulary, giving you test of critical thinking that could it useful in your day task. So , let's have it and luxuriate in reading.

Deborah Ellefson:

The actual book The Design of Sites: Patterns, Principles, and Processes for Crafting a Customer-Centered Web Experience will bring someone to the new experience of reading a book. The author style to spell out the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book to learn, this book very ideal to you. The book The Design of Sites: Patterns, Principles, and Processes for Crafting a Customer-Centered Web Experience is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

Dennis Taylor:

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Donna Salerno:

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