Sketching User Experiences

Getting the Design Right and the Right Design

Concept Cover

Bill Buxton

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 of these products survive, much less deliver on their promise. The folly? An absence of design, and an over reliance on just technology and/or traditional practice.

We need design. But design as described here depends on the skills of a number of different communities—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 these new types of products and systems. So while the focus is on design, the approach is holistic. Hence, the book speaks to designers, usability specialists, people from HCI, 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 building 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, executives and more;
- Full of case studies, examples, exercises, and projects, and access to video clips that demonstrate the principles and methods.
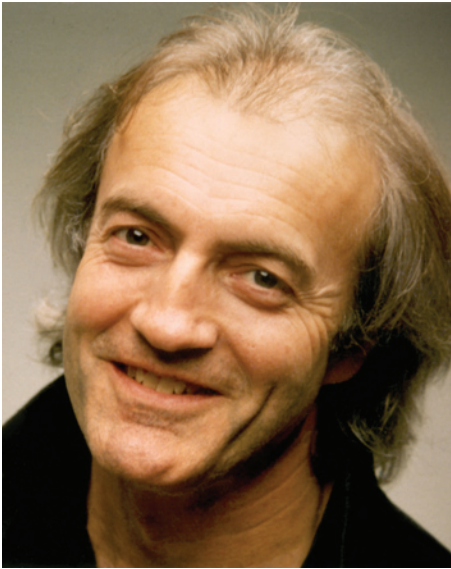
About the Author

Trained as a musician, Bill Buxton began using computers over thirty years ago in his art. This early experience, both in the studio an 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.

Table of Contents