

INTRODUCTION

Visitors to an organization’s digital space don’t want to think about interacting with its website. They want to—quickly and easily—make a purchase, find information, or do research. It helps if they can be engaged and enchanted in the process. How can we facilitate this excellent experience? It’s all about intentional design.

Consider the concept of “experience design.” Nathan Shedroff describes it as designing the “sensation of interaction with a product, service, or event, through all of our senses, over time, and on both physical and cognitive levels.”¹ Simply stated, experience design is “an approach to creating successful experiences for people in any medium.”²

Designing *digital* experience is similar, yet unique. That’s because in a digital space, experience designers have to “compensate for the absence of a sales professional who stands ready to greet customers as they arrive [and] to cheerfully help them accomplish their goal.”³

This book introduces digital experience design for websites. I have seen great information on parts and pieces of experience design. For example, B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore’s book, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*,

does a great job of exploring experience generally but really doesn't focus on digital experiences. Other books are great at helping improve the user experience on websites but miss the broader picture of designing digital experiences. This book connects the dots. It explains how website structure, community, and customers are all parts of the total digital experience.

Here's what you get: Chapter 1 defines what I mean by digital experience design. Then it discusses three aspects of designing digital experiences: what I call the structural, community, and customer focus.

Part 1 tackles the structural focus in digital experience design: creating better experiences by improving a website's ease of use. Great customer experiences happen when customers can focus on their own goals rather than on how to navigate your site. In Chapter 2, I explain what structural focus is. Chapter 3 compares three quite different models of experience design—Jesse James Garrett's *Elements of User Experience* model, David Armano's *Experience Map* model, and 37signals' *Getting Real* model of designing digital experiences. Chapter 4 explains information architecture and usability. It shows you how the experience design aspects of these concepts help provide a great user experience.

Part 2 explores the community focus in digital experience design. Memorable experiences are created via online participation and community. Chapters include an explanation of community focus in digital experience design (Chapter 5); how emerging digital tools such as blogs, wikis, podcasting, and videocasting can be used to create digital experiences (Chapter 6); and ways to actively build and invite conversations and community online (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 discusses how community and experience are created through social networking sites such as Flickr, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter, and how you can begin using these sites.

Finally, Part 3 addresses the customer focus. You will find out how to stage experiences online and get practical tips on how to

turn negative and neutral experiences into positive and memorable ones. Chapter 9 introduces customer-focused digital experience design. Chapter 10 provides examples and best practices of staged digital experiences. Personas and customer journey mapping—great ways to focus a customer experience—are the topics of Chapter 11. Chapter 12 provides ideas to get you started creating customer-focused digital experience design, including improving the ordinary, updating dinosaurs, and using merit badging techniques.

Finally, Chapter 13 synthesizes the preceding chapters into examples of how a website might look if it included all three types of focus.

So, bring what you have to the table. Let's examine some blueprints and choose some tools so you can get busy and build the amazing digital experiences of the future. Your customers will be glad you did.

Endnotes

1. Nathan Shedroff, Nathan: Experience Design, nathan.com/ed (accessed January 28, 2008).
2. Shedroff.
3. Kevin Mullet, The Essence of Effective Rich Internet Applications (macromedia white paper), November 2003, download.macromedia.com/pub/solutions/downloads/business/essence_of_ria.pdf (accessed January 28, 2008).