

Sketching User Experiences: *Getting the Design Right and the Right Design*

REVIEW BY KAY CORRY AUBREY

Usability Resources Inc, ▪ Bedford, Massachusetts ▪ Kay@UsabilityResources.net

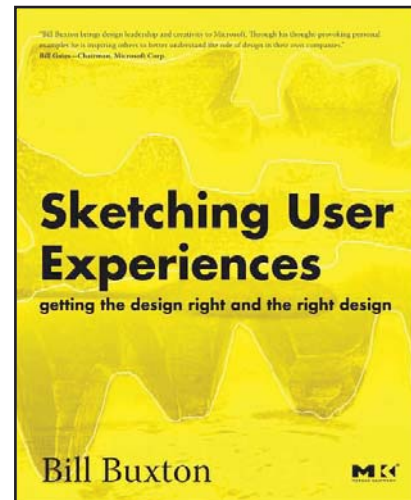
Bill Buxton, who leads design research at Microsoft, has written this book to help companies better understand the role of design within their organization. I learned about this book through a lecture Bill gave at last spring's PDMA "Front End of Innovation" conference in Boston.

This is a serious book, directed at people in the software industry, but it would also be a valuable resource for QRCs looking for new techniques for telling the "story" of products. The objective of user experience sketching is to help designers and end users mentally walk through the experience of using a proposed product, to understand how it would fit into the consumer's world. The methods Buxton describes would be used before a new category of product is fully defined. The sketches help to develop and evaluate early-stage ideas and not the actual product — to "get the right design vs. getting the design right."

The book discusses several techniques that allow for remote and collaborative idea creation. The author shows how to use toys and other trinkets to create 3D mockups to represent handheld devices. In a chapter on "visual storytelling," he describes how to create playful drawings of products by tracing over a photograph with Photoshop layers (no drawing ability required!). In a chapter on storyboarding, he describes simple techniques for simulating product animation with collage and stick figures arranged in a flipbook.

He advises the reader to leverage ambiguity. "Fake it before you build it," he suggests. "If you want to get the most out of the sketch, you need to leave big enough holes." The sketches need to be "quick, timely, cheap, disposable, plentiful, clear and fluid," with just enough detail to evoke a response to the design questions that need to be answered at that point in time. They are a way of taking a vague and half-baked idea and developing it.

User experience sketches are stimuli that allow users to try on an idea, to experience it and to understand how it fits into their world.



**Sketching User Experiences:
Getting the Design Right and the
Right Design**

By Bill Buxton
Publisher: Morgan Kaufman, 2007

Most importantly, these sketches are a means of communicating creative thoughts to the team, to "bake in" product concepts so everyone who views the sketches will have a shared awareness and common understanding. A large part of this book deals with how to manage and encourage the design discipline within an organization, with sketching as the medium.

He challenges the myth of "overnight success" for truly innovative products because it takes time to build the product development and marketing ecosystems to support it. The iPod, for instance, went through four different generations before it really took off. Many of the products that we might consider ground-breaking and innovative are actually built on technologies that have been around for a long time. For example, the LCDs in our cell phones, wristwatches and laptops

are based on liquid crystals discovered by Friedrich Reinitzer, an Austrian botanist, in 1888.

In the 1960s, Bill was part of the Xerox PARC team that developed the first graphical user interface (GUI) that used a mouse to point, eliminating the need for a computer user to enter obscure DOS commands. The GUI became mainstream in the 1980s and '90s with the invention of the Apple Macintosh and Windows. It is his belief that the technologies that will transform the world decades from now exist today.

You can find an interview with Bill Buxton, conducted by Kay Corry Aubrey, at the QRCA website (www.qrca.org) under the Publications link. 

Most importantly, these sketches are a means of communicating creative thoughts to the team, to “bake in” product concepts so everyone who views the sketches will have a shared awareness and common understanding.

The Myths of Innovation

REVIEW BY KAY CORRY AUBREY

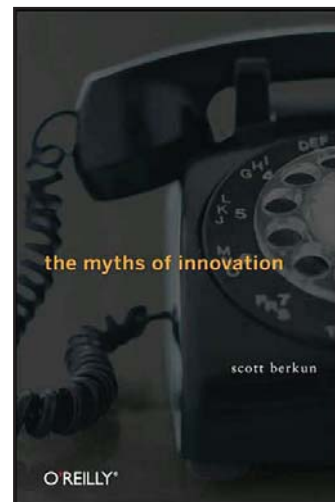
Usability Resources Inc, ▪ Bedford, Massachusetts ▪ Kay@UsabilityResources.net

This concise, wonderfully written, engaging and inspiring book seeks to explain how innovation happens.

All innovations come about as a result of past innovations. Scott Berkun debunks the myth that an innovation is the result of a single epiphany. In actuality, world-altering innovations — from the screw to gasoline engines to the internet — came about as the final link in a chain of other innovations. The well-known innovation is often just the last piece of the puzzle that completes the picture, and it appears on the scene at just the right moment.

The invention of the light bulb required glass, electricity, copper mining, refinement processes to create the filament and many other inventions. Each invention in the long chain that led to the light bulb came only after many failures along the way, and this is typical.

“The best ideas don’t always win, but that doesn’t stop people from believing they should,” Berkun says. He describes the “secondary factors” that contribute as much to the success of an innovation as the idea itself. Secondary factors include cultural fit, design, inheritance and tradition, politics (who stands to benefit?) and many other forces. Windows, HTML and Javascript are not the best-conceived languages,



The Myths of Innovation

*By Scott Berkun
Publisher: O'Reilly 2007*

but they have staying power in today’s internet because they are so entrenched. High-tech devices use the QWERTY keyboard not because it is the best ergonomic design, but because it is the keyboard that most people know.

In actuality, world-altering innovations — from the screw to gasoline engines to the internet — came about as the final link in a chain of other innovations.

Berkun also debunks the myth of the sole inventor. Edison was not the first person to think of the light bulb; he was the first person to make a successful product of it. On the other hand, people who create revolutionary inventions often do not realize the long-range impact of their innovation. This is because the innovator was just trying to solve a particular problem, not create a revolutionary new way of working.

Gutenberg is considered one of the most influential people who ever lived, above Einstein and Aristotle. During his lifetime, he had no idea of the long-range impact of his invention of the movable type. His intention was simply to make a living by printing Bibles.

There needs to be a story around an invention for it to be remembered. The founders of eBay had a hard time getting the press to pay attention to the original goal of their company, which was to create an internet-based service that would provide a perfect market economy for the exchange of goods and services. The story was too academic to arouse interest. However, the media swarmed when the company changed its story to say that eBay was formed as a way for the founder's fiancée to trade her PEZ shooters.

While Berkun says there is no “playbook for innovation,” he does explore techniques that have come out of well-known research on creativity. One important tip: Work passionately, but take breaks; insights come during an incubation period as you are doing other things. Some creative people keep working, but they switch their focus to another project, and for them this has the same effect. The subconscious mind plays a large role in creative thought.

He quotes Patty Maes of the MIT Media Lab, “Most of the work we do is like this. We start with a half-baked idea, which most people — especially



*It's Paris for fine cuisine,
Tokyo for a relaxing massage,
But for Top-Rated* Marketing Research,
Quality Recruiting,
and Exceptional Client Service,*

**You'll Always Come Back to AIM
Baltimore and Columbus.**

- *Impulse Survey
2005, 2006 & 2007

Here's why our clients say they'll keep coming back to AIM:

"AIM's project managers get the right recruits in the room quickly, easily and accurately. They not only keep us informed, but they also always keep our best interests in mind."

"AIM's state of the art facility and experienced project managers make my job easier. They're accessible, responsive and most importantly...their recruiting is second to none!"

For information and a competitive bid, contact:

**Baltimore
Columbus**

410-337-5000
614-583-2100



www.aimresearchnetwork.com/b1facmain.htm

©2006 Assistance In Marketing

critical people — would just shoot down right away or find uninteresting. But when we start working on it and start building, the ideas evolve. That's really the method that we use at the Media Lab... in the process of building something, we often discover the interesting things. That leads to interesting discoveries.”


Setting out to innovate can be a distraction; it is more productive to have a clear idea of the problem you are trying to solve. A large part of innovation is being able to pick the right problem to solve, define it clearly and then have the talent to solve it. Above all, the most important thing is to just go to work.

Truly novel ideas are most often initially met with rejection because people have a natural tendency to wait for an idea to be tested. The more unusual the idea, the greater the fear — we do not like to take risks or put our faith in the unknown. The more unlovable aspects of human nature (e.g., envy, pride, politics, sloth, misplaced priorities) tend to squash new ideas before they have a chance to develop.

By understanding what you are up against, you can increase the chances your ideas will take hold. If you are working within an organization, your biggest obstacles are most often political and psychological. In Berkun's view, a lot of modern management is based on the “command and control” model of employees, where the goal is to reduce risk, optimize performance and take control away from individuals. Innovation, by its nature, threatens the status quo, creates organizational realignments and carries risks.

Enlightened organizations create an environment that nurtures and rewards new ideas. Within an organization, innovation has the best chance of thriving within small teams of smart, motivated, hard-working people who are encouraged to experiment and are rewarded for taking initiative and risks. The manager of such a team protects his team from external threats, while matching people to resources so they can work effectively. This manager also needs to understand

how to present his team's work so that it is accepted within the larger organization.

You can find an interview with Scott Berkun, conducted by Kay Corry Aubrey, at the QRCA website (www.qrca.org) under the Publications link. 



**Why follow...
when you can lead?**

Leading since 1979.

 **FLEISCHMAN**
FIELD RESEARCH

For bids, bookings, and information:
(800) 277.3200 or Lisa@ffrsf.com
www.ffrsf.com

 **One stop shopping with discounts—First Choice Facilities**
Atlanta, Boston, Chicago/Oak Park
Los Angeles/Orange County, New York, Philadelphia,
San Francisco, Seattle, Tampa, Washington D.C./Baltimore
www.firstchoicefacilities.net

Owner-managed for quality MEMBER OF: AMA, MRA, AAPOR