Digital Etiquette

• “If we want users to like our products, we should design them to behave in the same manner as a likeable person"

• If we want users to be productive with our software, we should design it to behave like a supportive human colleague”

DESIGN PRINCIPLE

The computer does the work, and the person does the thinking
Digital Etiquette

“If an interactive product is stingy with information, obscures its processes, forces users to hunt around for common functions, and is quick to blame people for its own failings, users are sure to have an unpleasant and unproductive experience.

This will happen regardless of how polite, cute visually metaphoric, anthropomorphomic, or full of interesting content the software is.”

DESIGN PRINCIPLE

The computer does the work, and the person does the thinking
The most important characteristics of considerate interactive products (and humans):

Considerate products:
- Take an interest
- Are deferential
- Are forthcoming
- Use common sense
- Use discretion
- Anticipate people’s needs
- Are conscientious
- Don’t burden you with their personal problems
- Keep you informed
- Are perceptive
- Are self-confident

- Don’t ask a lot of questions
- Fail gracefully
- Know when to bend the rules
- Take responsibility
- Help you avoid awkward mistakes
Considerate products… take an interest

“Software should work hard to remember our habits… and everything we tell them”

Web purchases…
Every time the information is needed the website requires the user to re-enter it…
Order and then re-ordering by phone… most companies have all the information they need after the first order.
You call and they know your name, address, etc.
Considerate products … are forthcoming

Software should provide the user with related information that is related to “our goals”

“A helpful human would”

Good example

User prints a document

What is not communicated:

paper supply is low…
there are other documents in the queue…
there’s another printer that is available…
Considerate products … use common sense

“Many interactive products put controls for constantly used functions right next to never used controls.”

“You can easily find menus offering simple, harmless functions adjacent to irreversible ejector-seat expert functions.”

Considerate products … are conscientious

Developer/designers need to be professionally OCD about quality and being considerate

Authors’ example

To save old and newly revised contract document in the same folder “requires” that rename or overwrite the old!
You already have a file named BobsContract.docx. Do you want to replace it with this one?

- Yes
- No
- Cancel
Considerate products … don’t burden you with *their* personal problems

“We don’t need to see information about the computer’s data transfer rates and its loading sequence…”

“The software whines at us with error messages, interrupts us with confirmation dialog boxes, and … unnecessary notifications (“Document Successfully Saved…”)

**Considerate products … keep you informed**

“… informed about things that matter to *us*”
Considerate products … are perceptive
… watching the user’s preferences and remembering them without being asked explicitly to do so.

Considerate products … keep you informed
“… informed about things that matter to *us*”

Considerate products … are perceptive
“Products should also watch our preferences and remember them without being asked explicitly to do so”

The “cloud” did it!

Sharing the cloud
Shut down – Turn on - Open “Word” … you get “cloud’s” version with its fixed settings
Document is set for Times New Roman … insert “Text Box” with its own default, Arial 😞
Excel ... new defaults

Located Excel file and clicked “open”

This is the file contents I needed
Considerate products … don’t ask a lot of questions

“Users really don’t like to be asked questions by products…”

Asking questions tells users that the products are:

- Ignorant
- Forgetful
- Weak
- Fretful
- Lacking initiative
- Overly demanding

ATM asks, each time!… prefer Spanish, English or Chinese

After the 1st time “they” know “you”
Considerate products … fail gracefully

Example

“… the application accepted e-mail from the server – which then erased its copy – but it didn’t ensure the e-mail was properly recorded locally.”

“… Users often need to enter information into a set of forms on a page

After filling in 10 or 11 fields, a user might click the Submit button, and, due to some mistake or omission… have the site reject his input and tell him to correct it. The user then clicks the back arrow… to find all the valid entries discarded.”

… and then there is the need to click the back arrow!
Considerate products … help you avoid awkward mistakes

“Products that go the extra mile in looking out for users by helping them prevent embarrassing mistakes – and not berating them for it – will quickly earn their trust and devotion.”

Authors’ examples

“You are about to inadvertently send a text to your entire list of contacts instead of the one friend you were intending to confide in….

Or to send an email to the director of your department without attaching the quarterly report mentioned in the text.”
The most important characteristics of interactive products (and humans):

**Smart products:**

- Put idle cycles to work
- Have a memory
- Anticipate needs
- Remember details
  - File locations
  - Deducing information
  - Multi-session Undo
  - Past date entries
  - Foreign application activities on application files
Smart products … put idle cycles to work

“The argument against putting those cycles to work has always been “We can’t make assumptions; those assumptions might be wrong.”

“We need a new, more proactive way of thinking about how software can help people reach their goals and complete their tasks”
Smart products … have memory

“The argument against putting those cycles to work has always been “We can’t make assumptions; those assumptions might be wrong.”

“We need a new, more proactive way of thinking about how software can help people reach their goals and complete their tasks”

“… simply remember what the user did the last couple of times (and how), it can use that as a guide to how it should behave the next time.”
Smart products … anticipate needs

“… our goals and how we achieve them (via tasks) is generally similar from day to day.”

“Sally”… and I prefer a specific font and size

We should not be required to reset the font and size each time we open Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.

“Most mainstream applications allow their users to set defaults, but this doesn’t fit the bill as smart behavior”!!!
“Any time your application finds itself with a choice, and especially when that choice is being offered to a user, the application should remember the information from run to run.”

DESIGN PRINCIPLE
If it's worth it to the user do do it, it's worth it to the application to remember it.
If it's worth it to the user, do it, it's worth it to the application to remember it.

“Decided” not to lock the aspect ratio.

If it's worth it to the user, do it, it's worth it to the application to remember it.
Designing Smart Products

Making smart products work:

“Designers find that their thinking takes on a whole new quality.
The normally unquestioned recourse of popping up a dialog box gets replaced with a more studied process in which the designer asks much more subtle questions.”

“Characteristic patterns in how people make choices”
Decision-set reduction

“… guides us to the idea that pieces of information the application must remember about the user’s choices tend to come in groups.

The application should look for more subtle clues to differentiate which one of the small set is correct.”

The user accepts the same date format 50 times in a row and then manually enters a different format once.

The next time … what should the application do?

What was the “characteristic pattern”?
Designing **Social Products**

**Social** products know the difference between **social** and **market norms**

**Social** Norms
- Unspoken rules of reciprocity afforded to friends and family
- Things like lending a hand when in need and expressing gratitude

**Market** Norms
- Different set of unspoken rules afforded to people with whom one is doing business
- … things like assurances of fair price for quality goods and honesty in dealings

“To avoid being either rude or illegal, … the software must be designed to know the norms in which its users operate.”
Designing **Social Products**

Social products lets users present their best side

**User identity**

“… tempting to want to use names to represent a user’s identity, but names aren’t always unique enough, and they don’t always lend themselves to compact representation.”

**Dynamic vs. Static user profiles**

“User should have complete control of who gets to see this information, and should be able to curate it and organize it as the see fit …”
Designing Social Products

Social Products:

- Permit easy collaboration
- Know when to shut the door
- Help networks grow organically
- Respect the complexity of social circles
- Respect other users’ privacy
- Deal appropriately with the anti-social
Social Products … Permit easy collaboration

… lets people add review comments to documents, and others can add comments referencing earlier comments.

Google Docs
Microsoft: SharePoint
Social Products … Know when to shut the door

“…the socialness of the software should not overwhelm or distract from the primary task.”

“… users should have access to a polite but firm way to “shut the door”, suspending social interruptions for a time that the user needs to focus to get a task done.”
“Social software must have ways for new members to discover the network, join, build a presence, learn the rules, begin to participate, and receive gently reinforcement when the member transgresses against the subculture norms.”

Facebook
LinkedIn
Et al.
Facebook

“Unfortunately the mechanism for managing these circles and specifying which content goes to which circle is hard to find and cumbersome to use, occasionally resulting in some very embarrassed Facebook users.”
Social Products … Respect other users’ privacy

Facebook… and all others

“There will continue to be … strong financial incentives to disrespect their users’ privacy”

Social Products … Deal appropriately with the anti-social

Griefers

Social software has the tools for users to silence Griefers

The trick is knowing who the anti-social users are.