Virtual Event Report

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Introduction

Over the course of this essay, we will discuss the content of two different TED talks and I will provide some reflective thoughts and impressions about the ideas presented. For my virtual event I decided to watch a talk by Litha Soyizwapi about his journey to become a self-taught programmer and the lessons that he learned during that process. I also watched a talk by Don Norman in which he gave some interesting insights into how product design can affect a person's behavior.

Litha Soyizwapi

The TED talk titled "How I Taught Myself to Code" was an eye-opening experience. It starkly highlighted the contrasting perceptions of data abundance in America versus Africa, a perspective I had not fully appreciated until now. However, beyond this initial observation, Litha's success story proved profoundly inspiring. As someone who occasionally grapples with the complexities of web development and design, I found encouragement in his determination to learn and create despite the challenges.

He introduces three key insights that he used when first learning to code and I can see a great deal of utility in them. He greatly emphasizes learning the basics as this can allow you to have a more foundational understanding of what you create, leaving you with less gaps in knowledge. This may at first seem like a no brainer, but I can think of at least one time where I rushed ahead to the more fun aspects of development only to end up backtracking to the basics later on.

The second insight is to learn by doing. This is described as not only taking in the information but also working with it. Tinkering with the source code to discover new ways of solving certain problems with it. I can personally speak to this insight's impact on how I learned to code. I can't imagine learning how to code by simply reading about it, you have to do it too. I often use my browser's webpage inspector on certain websites I find interesting to sort of reverse engineer them and apply what I learn to my own projects.

The third and final lesson is applying that knowledge that you have gained to create something with utility. Creating projects with a purpose and building products with insight. He also stated that the execution of something like this is likely the hardest part of this process, which I can attest to.

Don Norman

My design philosophy owes much to Don Norman, whose book "The Design of Everyday Things" played a pivotal role in shaping my understanding, particularly during my Interaction Design course. His TED talk was equally enlightening and informative. Norman explored emotions such as fear, anxiety, and happiness, and their profound impact on individuals. He delved into three levels of processing and how product design can influence emotional responses across these levels.

He starts off the talk by speaking about how certain products can bring joy to the people that use them simply based on their design. He speaks to various product's visual beauty, general feel, and function. I can completely understand how these three aspects to a product's design can be of the utmost importance.

He later communicates the idea that fear and anxiety can be helpful to focus on the problem before you while happiness can allow a person to think more creatively but you are more prone to interruption. These ideas about how emotion can affect a person's workflow are ideas that I feel like I had always understood but now I have the words to truly express that understanding.

He later goes on to talk about the various levels of processing and how each level can be expressed in good design. The visceral level is the most base, subconscious level of information processing. Those innate, almost instinctual things in design like the beauty of symmetry and drawing a user's attention with bright red colors. The next level up is behavioral processing which includes skilled, automatic behavior that a person has learned to adapt to over time. He talks about how good behavioral design allows for the user to have greater control over the object or their environment. The third and final level of processing is reflective. He relates this level of processing to that of Sigmund Freud's super-ego in that works like a person's conscience. It is fueled by one's ideas about how others will perceive you, or in the case of design, how an object appears to others and what image of itself, or you that it expresses to them whether it is positive or negative.

This talk was very insightful for me as I feel some of my favorite things to do when it comes to building some bit of software or a website is the design aspects of it. What makes one design look appealing over another is something that we all know and understand deep down but can be incredibly difficult to explain to someone else. I enjoyed this talk very much and feel as though it has helped to provide me with better tools to understand some of those base principles of design, and how they can influence a user's experience with that product.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the virtual event featuring TED talks by Litha Soyizwapi and Don Norman offered valuable insights and inspiration. Litha's journey of self-taught programming highlighted the importance of learning the basics, hands-on experience, and the application of knowledge in creating valuable projects. Don Norman's discussion on product design and emotions shed light on the profound impact design can have on user experiences, emphasizing the significance of aesthetics, functionality, and emotional responses in design. Both talks contributed to a deeper understanding of programming and design principles, leaving me with newfound knowledge and tools for their respective fields.

References

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