

Don Norman

Four Principles of Human-Centered Design



Design has the power to create a better world, improve people’s lives and effect meaningful change. You can produce positive results that enhance people’s lives on a larger scale if you use the principles of human-centered design. **Don Norman**, who coined the term “user experience,” will help us understand. [Visit the Interaction Design Foundation](#) to learn more.

01 People-Centered



Focus on people and their context. Many of today’s systems, procedures, and devices are technology-centered, designed around the capabilities of the technology with people being asked to fill in the parts that the technology cannot do. People-centered means changing this, starting with the needs and abilities of people. It means considering all the people who are involved, taking account of the history, culture, beliefs and environment of the community. The best way to do this is to let those who live in the community provide the answers.

02 Solve the Right Problem



Solve the right problem by finding and addressing the root cause. Solve the fundamental, underlying issues, not the symptoms. We recommend starting with field studies and observations of actual practice. Ask “why?” at each issue. When the answer is “human error,” keep going. Core issues often include the people’s lack of understanding of the complexity of the entire system. Understand and solve the right problem, the root causes and underlying fundamental issues. Otherwise the symptoms will just keep coming back if we don’t!

03 Everything is a System



Think of everything as a system. Design must focus upon the entire activity under consideration, not just isolated components. Systems involve multiple complex feedback and feed-forward loops, some with time delays measured in days or months. Experts can provide essential analyses and approaches, but unless those most affected by the issues play a major role, in assuring that the suggestions are appropriate to the culture, the environment, and the capabilities and goals of the community, the results are apt to be unworkable and unsatisfactory.

04 Small & Simple Interventions



Work in an iterative manner. Do iterative work and don’t rush to a solution. Try small, simple interventions, learn from them one by one, and slowly your results will get bigger and better. With each iteration the prototype becomes more refined and usable. This process requires patience and fortitude to try numerous trials, rethink, and repeat until the outcomes are good enough for deployment. We must continually prototype, test and refine our proposals to make sure that our small solutions truly meet the needs of the people we focus on.

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