This publication is a delightful example of leading practitioners and thinkers cutting through the fog. Their insights about what makes great design and what makes viable businesses are interesting in and of themselves. However, their generalizations, particularly when taken together, form a remarkable set of ideas that one can imagine being useful to executives trying to decide where to play and how to win.

Patrick Whitney
Dean and Steelcase/Robert C. Pew Professor,
IIT Institute of Design
Fall 2008

The first principles of any field come from the interchange between leading practitioners and astute observers, who together cut through the fog of project details and decipher the general patterns that lead to great work.
According to Roger Martin and Michael Porter, the two key questions defining strategy are “Where to play?” and “How to win?” For example, in 2001 the CEO of a personal computer business was facing the decision of whether or not to play in the music business. On the surface, it made no sense. The music business was one of the very few industries where the tangible value proposition, which drives profitability, was commoditized. Instead of seeing the problem and thinking of the more broadly relevant and valuable self-identity and values, and all that’s involved, he looked at the intangible value of the activity of people enjoying music rather than the more measurable value of the players and disks people were buying. He looked at people’s whole experience, including how they shop and listen, how they share music, how they store music, and how they learn about new music, and other aspects of the activity that surround the products. Might there be a song in there somewhere?

Of course, thinking about Steve Jobs and Apple’s iPod and iTunes. Mr. Jobs is a rare entrepreneur, one who is great at starting new companies and turning large companies. He intuitively uses the way designers think to invent, reinvent, and build businesses. He doesn’t take a situation as a given and focus on how to optimize it. Instead, he asks, “What if…?” and before jumping to implementation, works with his teams to design and prototype multiple options that allow him to test in the real company.

The story of Jobs gives rise to a key question: How do you replicate this in other companies? Does every company have to find a design genius for their CEO?

The good news is that there are principles emerging in the design field that can be described, taught, applied, and built upon. We are finally building a more structured body of first principles for design, and thus a major contribution to the adoption of design methods by leaders of large companies. This example also shows that increasing company value is not just about creating new businesses. It’s also about how you continue to grow the value of core businesses. The first principles of any field come from the interchange between leading practitioners and astute observers, who together cut through the fog of project details and decipher the general patterns that lead to great work.

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**Bud TV**

I’m always interested in the intersection of things, particularly how design intersects with marketing and user experience. Because of this, I closely watched the ambitious Bud TV initiative launched over a year ago—a mea culpa digital effort which suffered from being in a crowded environment. Likely the effort was launched by the press and then quietly deployed as traffic didn’t even cover some early milestones, and was deleted from the beginning. Bud TV was a highly produced, slick effort that required users to register in order to view the content. In a fragmented digital world where content distribution strategies such as YouTube rule the day, this came across as an old model trying to be repositioned to a new environment. How could this have been avoided? Sideline a condition of consumer empathy combined with testing of viable prototypes would have been a good start. Had Budweiser launched much less ambitiously before understanding the changes in the environment that required users to register in order to view the content, the device, by letting you make a complete backup to your PC in less than a minute with the push of a button. It did what it did, and that was all it did. It was also about mitigating the risk of losing it. In addition, the “designers” of the program never really understood the legal issues. For users to register because of legal reasons satisfied the lawyers but not the users. At the core, case studies like this reinforce that whether you want to be a designer, marketer or engineer, our ability to solve complex problems—this, all in an age where the problem you are trying to solve may actually change before you can finish resolving it.

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**Pen computing**

One of my favorite examples of failure is pen computing. Think of the corporate successes of computer companies and products, including the GO, Magic Cap, and Windows for Pen Computing operating systems. But IBM, Microsoft, NCR Noodletop, the Sharp DTR-1, and Telepad. Perhaps at the head of the class was the Apple Newton, launched in August 1993 and killed in February 1995. How strange it seems trying to come up with another pen-based PDA venture, circa 1994. Anyone you approach has probably had every secondary come up suggesting the Newton, and on top of all this is the emerging promise of the next great thing: the smartphone. One would seem to have to be a fool to fund such a start-up, and you wouldn’t need to ask for it. Yet in this climate, along came Palm and hit the ball out of the park. How did they do this? It really was about all the things the device couldn’t do. From about this thing is toolkit. It did what it did, and that was all it did. It was also about mitigating the risk of losing the device, before you make a complete backup to your PC in less than a minute with the push of a button. Palm understood that engineering in technology, on its own, was not enough for success.

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**Feedback logic from analysis and you provide an interpretative experience, but combine them and you have a chance of providing something that’s not only understandable but serves a purpose.**

**What is your favorite example of INNOVATION FAILURE, and why?**

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**Nox, the outdoor apparel company, which closed in May 2009 after selling more than 100,000 units. The company was launched with great fanfare as a revolutionary concept offering fashionable, environmentally-friendly clothing through low inventory “webfront” stores. Several variables led to its failures, including the high cost of sustainable product design, lack of brand recognition in the fashion and retail industries, and lack of a few fundamental questions:**

- Would there be sufficient purchasing of Nox’s branded products on websites that allowed consumers to try out products in person and then order them online? The offering leaned on inventory-based profit margins, but was a webfront a viable model from the consumer’s point of view? In surveys conducted they found it to be the case, but in practice no one did. Having a web-based experience with actual users could have uncovered this problem early.

- Were there meaningful differences? The core Nox brand—sustainably produced outdoor apparel—had little or no difference from existing brands like Patagonia and The North Face. One highly tailored marketing message was Nox’s donation of 5% of revenue to charity—but this strategy started this in 1985 with their 1% For The Planet initiative.

**Will consumers really switch brands because one donates 4% more to charity?”**

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**Design is choice, and there are two places where you can compare something. (a) in the creativity/innovation/insight that it brings to enumerating the alternatives from which you choose, and (b) in the creativity/innovation/insight reflected in the choice/motivation.**

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**Our pivot point for living for always the most financial carrier in a large franchise to use our ability to think of the big picture, rate calculated risks, and develop executive innovations.”**

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**What is your favorite example of INNOVATION FAILURE, and why?**
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I’m always interested in the intersection of things, particularly how design intersects with marketing and vice versa. Because of this, I closely watched what happened with Bud TV. In August of 2007, Bud TV launched on a grand scale—a really digital effort which played to the content in a branded environment. Likely the effort was launched by the press and then quietly disbanded as traffic didn’t even come close to early estimates and was deleted from the beginning. Bud TV was a highly produced, slick environment that required users to register in order to view the content. In a fragmented digital world where content distribution channels such as YouTube rule the day, this came across as an old model trying to be renewed in a brave new world. How could such a failure have been avoided? Isolating a condition of consumer empathy combined with hard testing of multiple prototypes would have been a good start. Had Bud TV launched much fewer audience efforts and understood the changes in the digital space, it might have succeeded. In addition, the designers of the program never really understood the legal issue. For users to register based on legal reasons satisfies the lawyers but not the users. At the core, case studies like this reinforce that whether or not something is solved the legal issue. Forcing users to register because it did. It was also about mitigating the risk of losing the things it left out. It did what it did, and that was all.

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Palm understood people as much as they understood technology.

The failure of Palm companies was actually a valuable and free (for Palm) education. So, yes, you had to be a fool to have invested in Palm—but if you sold at the right time, you would be a very rich fool. The failure of prior companies was actually a valuable learning experience. Palm understood that engineering on its own was not enough for success. Palm understood people as much as they understood technology. The failure of your company was actually a valuable and free (for Palm) education. So, yes, you had to be a fool to have invested in Palm—but if you sold at the right time, you would be a very rich fool.

What is your favorite example of INNOVATION FAILURE, and why?

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NeXT as a hardware product was a beautiful piece of design and engineering, but it had serious flaws in how people could use it (no floppy drive at the time, only an expensive optical drive), even though it was an amazing software development platform and had a stunning high-res grey scale monitor. For a graphic designer, this screen and the use of display PostScript was the closest thing to paper yet, but without tactical user-centered needs, there was not enough of a market to sustain its life as a product.

What can we learn from this? Ultimately, the resurgence of Apple came in large part from the software (and the development team) that was developed for NeXT. Without the commitment Steve Jobs made to create this possibility, perhaps his return to Apple would not have been so successful.

For me, it is to trust that the real value is not in the physical design as thing, but as a system that may take multiple incarnations to reveal. I have a lot of favorite examples that fit this category, but one of the most important lessons can be learned from the one I hate to hate: the Segway. I think I hold a personal grudge against the Segway because for months before its release, I breathlessly awaited the unveiling of the invention that was to change the world (or at least that’s what I remember about the hype). As a radical early adopter, I knew I would get one the first week it was sold, if not the first day.

I don’t buy on new and novel because of a very basic flaw: the Segway ignores the social aspect of design. The use of any successful product actually complements the product. On the Segway, the user is an uncomfortable appendage at best, and at worst, a moving target for stares, snears, and—once in San Francisco—an exciting challenge for some water-gun-toting kids.

Design should be empowering but adaptive to typical behaviors; challenging but respectful of social and physical context.

The Segway fails at both, so it’s new and people aren’t used to it, but because it failed to design the human with the hardware.

The problems of climate change and social justice seem intractable, and the idea of making incremental improvements is not very inspiring, especially in an industry where we are rewarded—financially and culturally—for major innovations.

I guess transportation is on all of our minds these days, given the oil price increase, as is the reality that the U.S. finally has to pay for its suburban car culture model. I do see many daily examples of unfortunate attempts to implement good design ideas. It’s around us all the time in the Bay Area with transportation design, and I note it especially regarding the encouragement of bicyclists as one element to reduce urban congestion.

We have public transportation (sort of) in the form of BART, a commuter rail system. Bicyclists are encouraged on BART except that there is no place to store them, intelligently, in the stations, and they are not allowed on the trains during commute hours. I’ve reported that one example of door signage used to encourage cycling. Here is a typical one:

First note that the graphics are so small that you cannot even read them at a distance. Even from a bike they are difficult to see until you are on top of them, and then you do not know what they mean, even if you are an experienced road cyclist.

I look at these hilarious design solutions and see the dysfunction within civic departments. It is nearly comical yet tragic. We hear talk at high levels about the crumbling infrastructure in the U.S.—and can only wonder if the solutions will be superficial or meaningful—and about how we highlight examples of good design to educate our decision makers.

The fact is that there are many examples of good design solutions in this area, around the country, and around the world, but we usually choose to ignore them until there is a crisis or unless a renegade group like Critical Mass takes to the streets.
NeXT as a hardware product was a beautiful piece of design and engineering, but it had serious flaws in how people could use it (no floppy drive at the time, only an expensive optical drive), even though it was an amazing software development platform and had a stunning high-res grey scale monitor. For a graphic designer, this screen and the use of display PostScript was the closest thing to paper yet, but without tactical user-centered needs, there was not enough of a market to sustain its life as a product. What can we learn from this? Ultimately, the resurgence of Apple came in large part from the software (and the development team) that was developed for NeXT. Without the commitment Steve Jobs made to create this possibility, perhaps his return to Apple would not have been so successful.

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NAT as a hardware product was a beautiful piece of design and engineering, but it had flaws. Even if it is true that people could use the floppy disk at the time, only an expensive optical drive, even though it was an amazing software development platform and had a stunning high-gray scale monitor. For a graphic designer, this screen and the use of display PostScript was the closest thing to paper yet, but without tactical user-centered needs, there was not enough of a market to sustain its life as a product. What we can learn from this? Ultimately, the resurgence of Apple came in large part from the software (and the development team) that was developed for NeXT. Without the commitment Steve Jobs made to create this possibility, perhaps his return to Apple would not have been so successful.

For me, it is to trust that the real value is not in the physical design as thing, but as a system that may take multiple incarnations to reveal.
**QBEAT**

My favorite design failure is the QBEAT system. As Paul David has shown, it was obsolete only a few years after its design. It was designed to show the working process, due to the fragile mechanical mechanism of the time, but now it became remedied. By the QBEAT system, it was established and become "distended."

**Transportation**

The American national transportation system is a complex but incredibly important problems we are going to be working on for the next hundred years. Especially given the rising price of oil, we are in a new national transportation policy. The major airlines the year ending service to regional airports, and they're even cutting 25% of flights to large cities like St. Louis and Minneapolis.

This is an innovation failure not of any particular firm or agency, but a system-wide policy failure, which is emerging into issues of unavailability. A major policy shift in this case is essential as catalyst for the needed change. Personally, I empathize with a British view, I can continually shock by the ability Americans have to work remarkably efficiently and entrepreneurially to solve big problems like this, so I think progress will be made, but not until one out of the usual options.

**Pallotta TeamWorks**

A favorite design/innovation failure is Pallotta TeamWorks. PTTW is the company behind the initial success of fundraising events such as the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day Walks and AIDS Rides. As a for-profit fundraiser, we were involved with charities to create and operate events that were not only with charities’ causes. By embracing the modern marketing, design, and business practices that charities had been using, PTTW revolutionized all these dollars in 2002 and introduced a new category of innovative experiences to the world of fundraising. By 2002 PTTW closed the doors on its headquarters in Los Angeles, no longer able to operate a viable business.

What happened? As PTTW became more and more successful it began to promote its own brand so heavily to fundraisers that the board began to work with and block the charitable objectives being "purchased" by the fundraisers. As a result, the company became an easy target for detractors, causing its charity clients to defect in droves.

What can we learn from this?

Innovation and design are approaches to create meaningful products, services, and experiences that attract and keep customers. Innovation and design are not sufficient solutions in and of themselves.

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**TRANSPORTATION**

We do have to think about how we are competing business models.

**Systemizing experimentation, however, can create a way to innovate by rapidly trying out new ideas and pushing through to stuff that’s really a breakthrough experience.**

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**Blind momentum**

A condition created by the embrace of a great idea and a desire to move expeditiously without careful assessment of the "how" in getting there. "We build it and they will come" is the modus operandi of this condition. Blind momentum is operating without a roadmap and often without real indicators whether one is moving in the right direction or not. This "figuring things out" (time, resource and money allocation) along the way has worked well for some start-ups, but for a firm with different disciplines, drivers, and value proposition to clients, moving fast without understanding the operational support to enable innovation can and has proven to be detrimental.

It took 10 years before they finally got the formula right.

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**Iraq war**

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What happened? As PTW became more and more successful it began to promote its own brand so heavily to fundraisers that the brand became a barrier to the work PTW did. The brand became too big, leading PTW to lose its footing and go out of business. By 2000 PTW was marketing itself as a powerful force for good, but by 2002 it was a laughing stock.

What can we learn from it?
Innovation and design are approaches to creating meaningful products, experiences, and services that attract and keep customers. Innovation and design are not sufficient solutions in and of themselves.

Blind momentum: A condition created by the embrace of a great idea and a desire to move expeditiously without careful assessment of the “how” in getting there. “We build it and they will come” is the modus operandi of this condition. Blind momentum is operating without a roadmap and often without real indicators whether one is moving in the right direction or not. This “figuring things out” (time, resource and money allocation) along the way has worked well for some start-ups, but for a firm with different disciplines, drivers, and value proposition to clients, moving fast without understanding the operational support to enable innovation can and has proven to be detrimental.

It took 10 years before they finally got the formula right.

The worst design and innovation example I can come up with is the war in Iraq. While the attack seemed well planned, the aftermath was un-thought of. Good design incorporates thinking through outcomes.
You hold in your hands a publication of the IIT Institute of Design (www.id.iit.edu), a graduate school within Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Since its founding as the New Bauhaus in 1937, the Institute of Design has grown into the largest full-time graduate design program in the world, with over 150 students from around the world. The school offers a studio-based Master of Design with an emphasis in communication design, interaction design, product design and development, strategic design, systems thinking, and user research, a dual Master of Design/ MBA with the IIT Stuart School of Business, and the Master of Design Methods, a nine-month executive program. The Institute of Design created the country’s first Ph.D. design program in 1985.

This book was inspired by the conversations and presentations at the school’s annual Strategy Conference (www.id.iit.edu/events/strategyconference), at which several of the interviewees have been featured speakers and regular attendees. Bruce Nussbaum, innovation and design editor for Businessweek, describes the conference this way:

“Businessweek”’s Bruce Nussbaum describes the Institute of Design’s Strategy Conference this way:

‘The Institute of Design’s Strategy Conference is the singular event you must attend if you are serious about knowing the most leading thinkers in the discipline of innovation. As the global business culture shifts from a management philosophy of maximizing efficiencies to maximizing possibilities, the intersection of strategy and design is the space you must inhabit.’

The interviews—The interviews are with leading people and ideas and are crafted as a dynamic perspective on global design and business strategy, circa 2008.

- Akim Al-Hadidi
- Jonathan Campbell
- Alan Chermayeff
- Iwan Chung
- Emman Farkh
- Jordan Fischer
- Vincent LaConte
- Ioannis Kouris
- Unknown
- Unknown

Of course, inspiration is cheap; creation is hard. The interviews and articles in this book were created by the generous contribution of dozens of smart, talented, and extremely busy people:

The Interviewers—for identifying interesting people and topics and co-creating a diverse perspective on global design and business strategy, circa 2008:

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3000 IDEO Institute of Design Strategy Conference 2008
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The Interviewees—for taking the time to answer our questions, provide thoughtful references, and put up with our gentle editorial harassment:
- David Armano
- Bill Buxton
- Jon Campbell
- Valerie Casey
- Rob Forbes
- Bill Hill
- Tore Kristensen
- Matt Mason
- Peter Merholz
- Chris Meyer
- Clement Mok
- Rob Pew
- Brandon Schauer
- David Verba

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- Jonathan Campbell
- Alex Cheek
- Irene Chong
- Megan Fath
- Jordan Fischer
- Vincent LaConte
- Ido Mor

Acknowledgments

You hold in your hands a publication of the IIT Institute of Design (www.id.iit.edu), a graduate school within Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Since its founding as the New Bauhaus in 1937, the Institute of Design has grown into the leading full-time graduate design program in the U.S., with over 1,000 students from around the world. The school offers a master of fine art degree, as well as studies in communication design, interaction design, product design and development, strategy, design, systems thinking, and user research, a dual master of design/ MBA with the IIT Stuart School of Business, and the Master of Design Methods, a cornerstone program. The Institute of Design created the country’s first M.U.D. design program in 1959.

This book was inspired by the conversations and presentations at the school’s annual Strategy Conference (www.id.iit.edu/events/strategyconference), at which several of the interviewees have been frequent speakers and regular attendees. Bruce Nussbaum, innovation and design editor for *BusinessWeek*, describes the conference in this way:

The Institute of Design’s Strategy Conference is the singular event you must attend if you want to know how the design industry thinks in the discipline of innovation. As the global business culture shifts from a management philosophy of maximizing efficiencies to maximizing possibilities, the intersection of strategic design is the space you must work in.