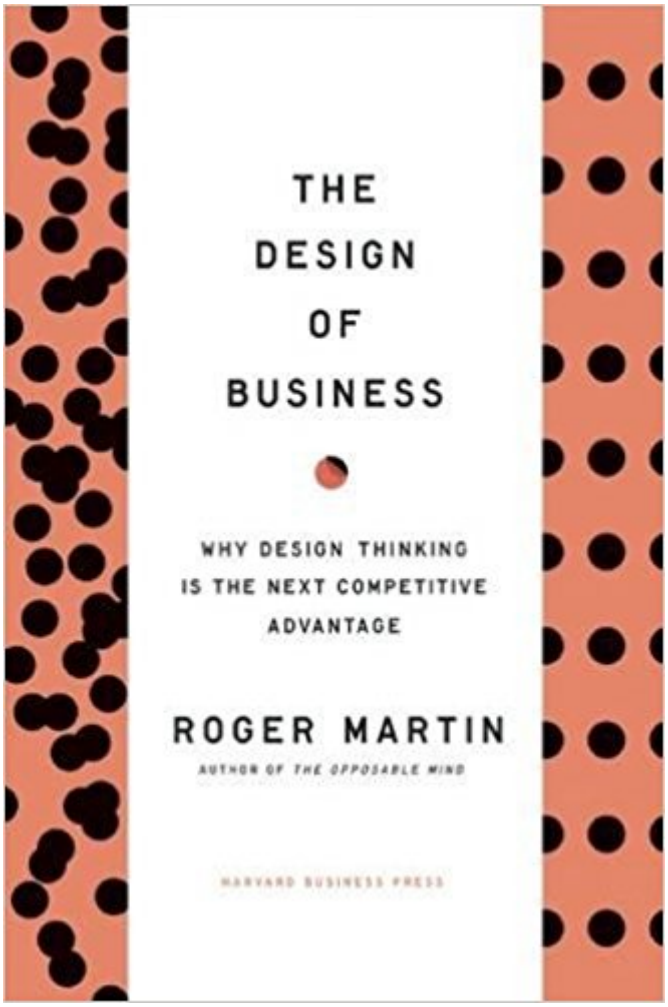
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The Design Of Business: Why Design Thinking Is The Next Competitive Advantage



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Synopsis

Most companies today have innovation envy. They yearn to come up with a game—changing innovation like Apple’s iPod, or create an entirely new category like Facebook. Many make genuine efforts to be innovative—they spend on R&D, bring in creative designers, hire innovation consultants. But they get disappointing results.Why? In The Design of Business, Roger Martin offers a compelling and provocative answer: we rely far too exclusively on analytical thinking, which merely refines current knowledge, producing small improvements to the status quo.To innovate and win, companies need design thinking. This form of thinking is rooted in how knowledge advances from one stage to another—from mystery (something we can’t explain) to heuristic (a rule of thumb that guides us toward solution) to algorithm (a predictable formula for producing an answer) to code (when the formula becomes so predictable it can be fully automated). As knowledge advances across the stages, productivity grows and costs drop-creating massive value for companies.Martin shows how leading companies such as Procter & Gamble, Cirque du Soleil, RIM, and others use design thinking to push knowledge through the stages in ways that produce breakthrough innovations and competitive advantage.Filled with deep insights and fresh perspectives, The Design of Business reveals the true foundation of successful, profitable innovation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

… among the most fundamental and comprehensive books ever written about the subject of

business design and design thinking. — Business Design Association, November 2nd, 2009…for readers interested in the processes of design…there are some interesting bits of detail and discussions on how exactly this is done. - The Financial Times, October 15, 2009Insightful analysis of a hot management trend, useful for executives of all levels. —BusinessWeek, October 26, 2009…a tough-minded elegant survey of why design thinking shouldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t be considered some soft thing thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s nice for business at the edges but not necessary at the core. —MIT Sloan Management Review, Improvisations blog, October 2009...offers thoughtful and valuable insight for all managers, and concludes with important instructions for individuals who want to become design thinkers. An excellent book. -Booklist, October 15, 2009

Roger Martin is dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto and a professor of strategic management at the school. He authored The Responsibility Virus, The Opposable Mind, and many articles in leading business publications including Harvard Business Review, BusinessWeek, Fast Company, and Barron's.

The Design of Business by Roger Martin is a thought-provoking book that seeks to probe the reasons behind the current state of business and the new ways of thinking needed to change that state for the better. The book in my opinion is miss-titled as it is more about thinking than design. This does not make it a bad book, but one that will disappoint readers looking for design techniques based on the title.Martin's thesis centers around a few key concepts including:The knowledge funnel where ideas and innovations move from exploring mysteries of business and customers, to defining heuristics and finally developing algorithms. While the funnel looks like a traditional innovation process, Martin applies it to aspects of organizational design, behavior and innovation to good effect.Martin points to the difference between managing businesses for reliability and seeking validity. Reliability concentrates on managing predictable performance, financials, reducing process variance and establishing control. Validity concentrates on learning what is right based more on heuristics and qualitative than quantitative methods. Martin's conjecture is that we need both, but probably need more validity to generate the creativity and innovation needed to survive in a dynamic market.Design thinking, here Martin borrows Tim Brown of IDEO's definition and makes the connection between design thinking and abductive reasoning which centers around observing data that does not fit with existing models or patterns. Abductive reasoning is in sharp contrast to deductive and inductive thinking that dominant business management.The case studies on P&G,

RIM, Cirque du Soldier are predictable and read more like narrative stories of executive actions rather than an analysis of what these companies did to redesign and innovate in their company. Frankly I have read other authors case studies of these companies and found them more valuable.The combination of all of this gives me the impression that the book is a set of ideas in search of an application. Now that may sound harsh, but I kept looking for support on how I can apply these ideas by learning from others.Martin does include a discussion about a personal knowledge system that consists of the way you view the world, the tools you use to organize your thinking and understanding and finally the experience that you need to build your sensitivity skills. The Personal Knowledge system is an example of what I am talking about, good ideas, presented in a clear fashion but without a particular set of next steps or examples of how mere mortals have transformed themselves.Using Martin's terminology I get his ideas and see them as valid, but I was looking for a little reliability based tools and approaches to turn valid ideas into action and results.The book presents its ideas in a fairly academic context, discussed more as ideas than recipes or a framework for designing a business. That is a disappointment as the book was recommended to me as a design book.I recommend the book for people who want to explore the way of thinking and deep systems behind design thinking. I cannot recommend the book for people who are looking to learn about how to apply design thinking. If you are looking for a good design thinking book go to the source Tim Brown's new book Change by Design which has a greater focus on understanding design thinking at an actionable level.

I was interested in learning more about "design thinking" and how it applied to businesses and purchased the book. After all, Martin had a strong reputation in the field and I wanted to read what the best in the field had to say about the subject.The first chapter whetted my appetite; I was able to get a glimpse of what design thinking could offer. In the subsequent chapters I learned about a few more pieces of the puzzle as the author seemed to remove some veils. But the more veils removed the more it looked the same: cloudy with some allure of the beauty hiding behind the veils. Most salient attributes, repeated over and over again, are "reliability vs validity," "traditional vs. design thinking," "backward looking vs. forward looking," "inductive and deductive reasoning vs. abductive reasoning."The fundamental argument set forth is this: Reliability oriented managers of the traditional organizations try to find comfort in reliability based on historical data. Future does not necessarily a repeat of the past; ergo, reliability based thinking is old fashioned and traditional. Contrary to this, validity based thinking seeks validity in the unfolding future. Now, all this is very attractive thoughts to me. But ...The writing has far too many examples of how successful design

thinking worked for P&G, Herman Miller, RIM, and others. The amount of explanation of what design thinking is, how abductive reasoning works, or how design thinking can be learned or taught is generally missing. Ironically, despite the forward looking strength of design thinking, most of the narrative is the backward looking evidence seeking in nature, and thus, one could argue that it leans towards the antithesis of design thinking: reliability orientation.You will leave this book somewhat frustrated and not really understanding what design thinking is. The author spends much more time making a case against reliability oriented, traditional thinking than for forward looking design thinking.Now, some will likely say that if I don't get it design thinking is not for me. Who knows, maybe they are right. But I would have expected a book with a stronger presence in the domain of design thinking rather than in the backward looking traditional thinking, and make the core idea clearly presented rather than talking around it by way of examples. Read chapter 7 (the last chapter) first, that may help alleviate the above problems to a small extent.The book succeeds, however, in getting you read more about design thinking and abductive logic, and is entertaining.

There might be business and design books I agree with more (Marty Neumeier, for instance) but I can't think of any this fascinating, rich and useful.Part of what makes this book so satisfying is that Martin thinks rigorously, communicates clearly, and takes a definite stand on his positions. This means there's substance to his arguments -- something concretely to respond to, whether your response is critical, affirmative or something between.That doesn't mean it's a how-to book. It isn't, and if that's what you are looking for this book will disappoint you. This is not a book of design thinking recipes to implement. (As Martin would say, it is not algorithmic.) It provides a conceptual framework for approaching business problems from a new and more productive angle.For the practical-minded, Martin provides plenty of examples to illuminate his points. For those who enjoy theory, he even adds (optional) sidebars that dig deeper into the intellectual underpinning of design thinking. It is all tied together with accessible language and visual models which can be adopted by design thinkers to help effect organizational change.One warning, though: this is not a book for lazy readers. It isn't one of those magazine-articles-fluffed-up-to-book-size-with-anecdotes. Many will use parts of their brains that haven't stirred since college. But little of the book is merely theoretical, none of it is needlessly obscure, and just about all of it is useful and applicable to day-to-day reality.Highly recommended.

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