

Less, but better.

Why simplicity is your best design strategy.

Welcome! My name is Michael Garvey. I'm a designer at Zappos.

By nature, I'm an artist, but came to the User Experience industry after some time in sales, entrepreneurship, and management. I eventually discovered that what I really want to do is design stuff, and so I feel very fortunate to work in a role that's so fulfilling to me. But my previous experiences have given me a business-minded context for my work. So I understand and intuitively approach my work from a business standpoint, not a design-as-art standpoint.

I'd like to get a sense of the perspective, you as an audience, are coming from...

How many of you create things as part of the work you do? (Make something from nothing)

- Creativity is one of the main features of humanity that distinguish us from apes and other animals.

How many in this room identify "design" as one of the functions you perform? (Guide that creation, or make decisions about that creation?)

- Those of you in executive roles, product management, engineer or designer positions all likely perform some level of a design role because you contribute to the design/making process.

What is good design?

And why is simplicity your best strategy?

Anything that is crafted has an element of design.

An program... a book... a door handle...

Bad design is memorable because of how it surprises us with disruption and disappointment. Good design is memorable because of how it surprises us with beauty, elegance, etc.

I said that "Simplicity is your best design strategy." What I want to communicate today is how to utilize simplicity to its best effect.

Why is simplicity your best strategy? Because simplicity implies:

- Clarity
- Effectiveness
- Beauty
- Among other positive things....

Simplicity could be seen as a negative, especially in terms of technology. Such as if a service is simplistic, it may be ineffective or insufficient. But in design, that's not

**“These designs
exude a certain integrity.”**

–Marc Newson

Marc Newson: These designs exude a certain integrity.

“Integrity” may seem like an odd word to choose when describing a design.

integrity |in'tegritē|

noun

1 the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness

uprightness: *he is known to be a man of integrity.*

2 the state of being whole and undivided: upholding territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

- **the condition of being unified, unimpaired, or sound in construction:** *the structural integrity of the novel.*
- internal consistency or lack of corruption in electronic data: [as modifier] : *integrity checking.*

We think of integrity first as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, moral uprightness.” While this is true of people, it is also true of design. Because in addition, “integrity” is “the condition of being unified, unpaired, or sound in construction.”

- The design does not promise to be more innovative, powerful or valuable than it really is. It does exactly what you expect (what it promises) to do.

- Its purpose is clear, and it works.

- It has strong principles in its fiber.

“They describe values.”

–Jony Ive

Put another way, a good design “describes values”.

Design values (and design principles) are essential to good design; and when used properly, the design will describe them.

Let me show you what I mean.

The best designers in the world observe

PROVEN VALUES — & — DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Values & Principles are synonymous in this case.

They are used specifically on individual projects, and generally for all design work.

For example, at Zappos we have company values that we strive to reflect in our design, like:

- Create fun and a little weirdness (Raining Cats & Dogs)
- Deliver WOW through service (Tap to call CLT)

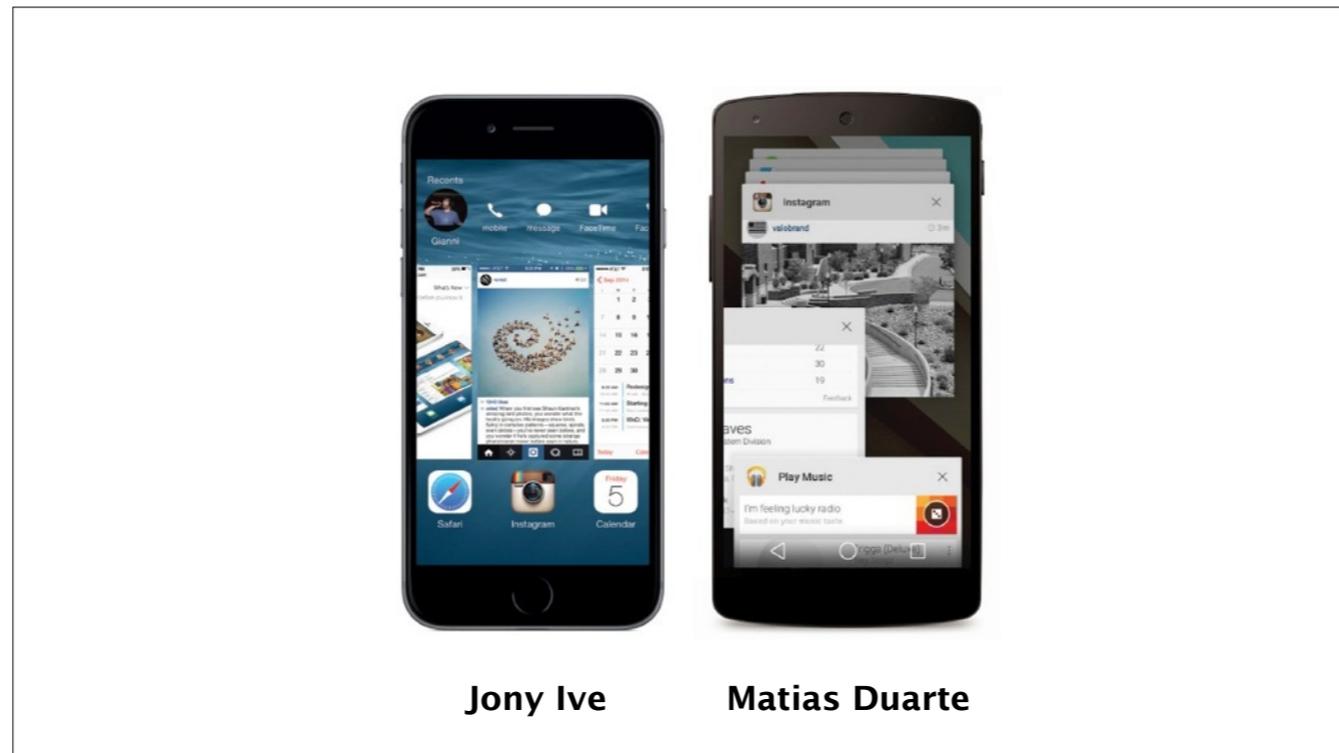
But on certain projects, we would define specific design values:

- Increase efficiency (improved checkout flow)
- Be proactive in guidance

We do this first, before hardly anything else.

How design principles can help your team:

- Executives: Offer the opportunity to give buy-in early on in the project & in a general way regarding the overall project. Also offers the opportunity to establish a rapport.



The design of these separate operating systems are fueled by an equally passionate dedication to the ideals inherited from 60 years of design thinking. You may have noticed that iOS and Android have become very similar over time. Recently, Android enthusiasts rightly remarked that iOS 7 & 8 were merely catching up to Android. There's a reason there are similar paradigms expressed in the design (and features).

If we take a look at the design thinking that informs these designers, we can begin to understand the way they remain rooted in the wisdom of old masters, while forging the future.

<http://www.wired.com/2014/09/design-package-2014/>



Bill Buxton

Famous for first multi-touch tablet (1984).

“It is ultimately experiences, not things, that we are designing.”



Matias Duarte

Vice President of Design, Google.

“Design is essential in today’s world. It defines your experiences.”

A FOCUS ON THE USER EXPERIENCE

Bill Buxton said, “It is ultimately experiences, not things, that we are designing.”

REFLECTING THAT THINKING,

Matias Duarte says, “Design is essential in today’s world. It defines your experiences.”



Charles Eames

Famous furniture design (1956).

“The details are not the details, they make the product.”



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“No detail is too small to bring a smile to your face.”

THE DETAILS ARE EVERYTHING

Charles Eames said, “The details are not the details, they make the product.”

REFLECTING THAT THINKING,

Matias Duarte says, “No detail is too small to bring a smile to your face.”



Paul Rand

Famous for the IBM logo (1972).

“I haven’t changed my mind about modernism... It means simplicity; it means clarity.”



Jony Ive

Senior Vice President of Design, Apple.

“I think there is a profound and enduring beauty in simplicity, in clarity.”

SIMPLICITY AND CLARITY ARE BEAUTIFUL

Paul Rand said, “I haven’t changed my mind about modernism... It means simplicity; it means clarity.”

REFLECTING THAT THINKING,

Jony Ive says, “I think there is a profound and enduring beauty in simplicity, in clarity.”



Dieter Rams

Famous Braun hardware (1960s).

“Good design is unobtrusive...[and] restrained, to leave room for the user’s self-expression.”



Jony Ive

Senior Vice President of Design, Apple.

“[iOS7 is] unobtrusive and deferential ...It actually elevates your content.”

GOOD DESIGN IS UNOBTRUSIVE AND ELEVATES THE CONTENT

Dieter Rams said, “Good design is unobtrusive...[and] restrained, to leave room for the user’s self-expression.”

REFLECTING THAT THINKING,

Speaking of iOS 7, Jony Ive says, “[it is] unobtrusive and deferential ...It actually elevates your content.”

So this gives us some example of how these design leaders learn from our forefathers in design... And Dieter Rams is my favorite. I find his specific, rule-based, German, way of thinking to be very instructive. He wrote what is now known as Dieter Rams’ 10 Principles of Good Design. I’m going to take you through them, but first, and intro to Mr. Rams.



Dieter Rams is one of the founding fathers of simple design, and has been proven an authority by crafting some of the greatest designs in modern history. His work is so good, it not only hasn't changed, but has been referenced and copied in equally significant design work.

Our lives are dominated by objects, designed for a specific purpose.

Iconic designs of today have at their heart, the influence of Dieter Rams.

When he first joined Braun in the early 1950s, they were a small operation making radios. But within 1 year, he had transformed their produce line and his 10 principles of good design were already taking shape.

Tom Dykhoff (I'm not making that up!) asks, "What is the Dieter Rams idea about what makes a good design?"

Rams says, "It is believable, 'glaubhaft in Deutsch.' It should be 'not lying.' You can see the companies that are taking design really 'honest.' You can could count them on your hands, now there are only two, Apple is one."

He means, good design does exactly what it says on the label.

Dieter Rams

10 Principles of Good Design

So what are the principles that have guided Rams into crafting some of the most simple and successful designs?



RAMS' DEFINITION:

The possibilities for innovation are not, by any means, exhausted. Technological development is always offering new opportunities for innovative design. But innovative design always develops in tandem with innovative technology, and can never be an end in itself.

MY INTERPRETATION:

The possibilities for innovative design are infinite, but tied directly to the technology it is interpreting or reflecting. Good design never outpaces the technology it supports.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN ONE FORCE OUTPACES ANOTHER?



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HERE WE SEE BEAUTY OF SYNCHRONY. ALSO A VERY UNUSUAL DOG.

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RAMS' DEFINITION:

A product is bought to be used. It has to satisfy certain criteria, not only functional but also psychological and aesthetic. Good design emphasizes the usefulness of a product while disregarding anything that could possibly detract from it.

MY INTERPRETATION:

The main function is the main goal of the design. The main function should be obvious and intuitive, supported and emphasized by the aesthetics. Anything that detracts from the main function should be removed or minimized.



We saw his record player in the video. He made the purpose of the object clear, and the design was considerably more effective and popular than the previous tradition.

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This is a an app I designed recently with a friend. You too can be guided to a slice of heaven! First, download it in the Play Store.

If you download it to your phone you'll notice that we offer a bit more information than on the watch. We know that if you're using the app on your wrist, you're not going to want to or be able to read much information. Rather, you're wanting an at-a-glance visual. This design clearly points the way to your nearest pizza shop with the pizza slice, and references your position relative to the north pole so you know what direction to head. If you're concerned you're going too far, we give you an estimation of the distance. When you get close, you can read the name so you know what shop to look for. That's it. Simple. Useful.

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RAMS' DEFINITION:

The aesthetic quality of a product is integral to its usefulness because products are used every day and have an effect on people and their well-being. Only well-executed objects can be beautiful.

MY INTERPRETATION:

"Aesthetic" here means the design aspects that give the user pleasure through beauty. So users should positively effected the beauty of the design.

But remember, "Only well-executed objects can be beautiful."



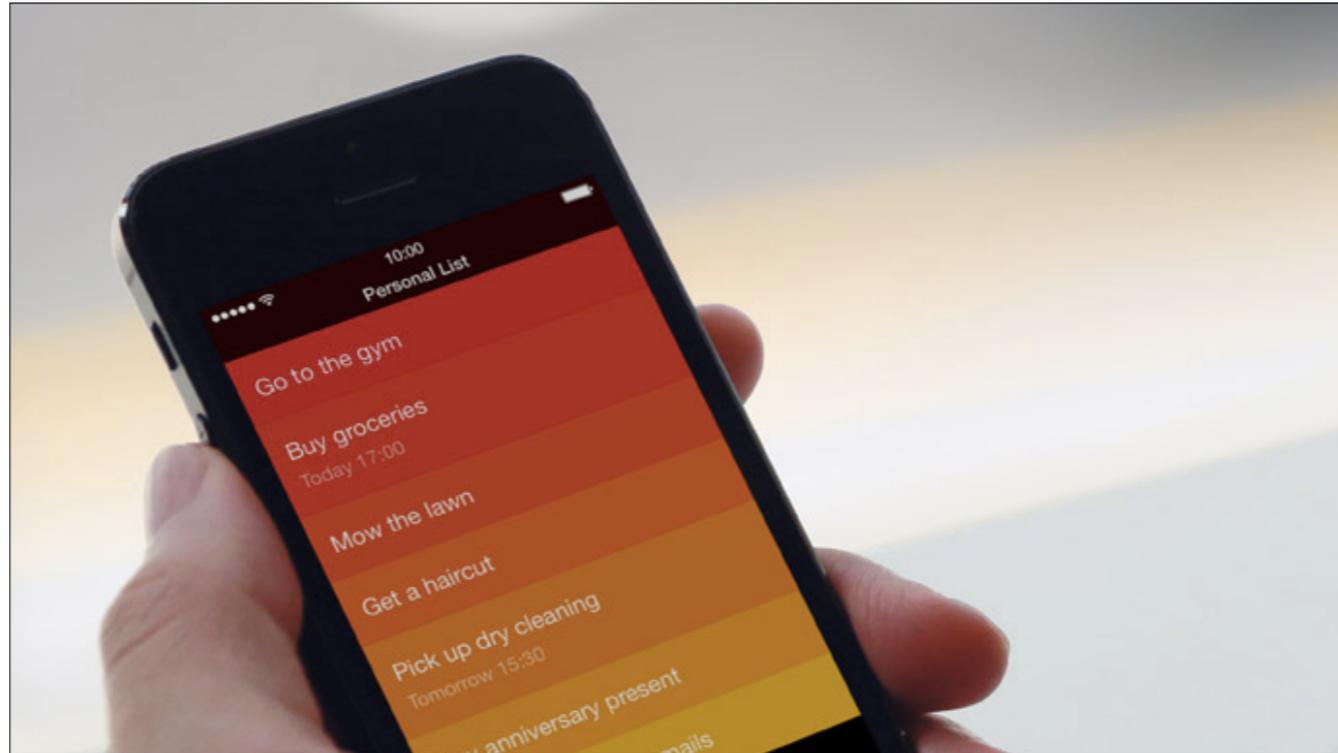
The ground-breaking design of the Apple G3 demonstrates the power of aesthetics. Granted, this is a love it or hate it design. But you may remember that in that era, these units were extremely popular. Users were evangelical in their love for them.

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Aesthetics can also be simple and utilitarian. The Clear app is both beautiful and effective. The variegation in color creates separation, emphasis and ultimately simplifies the overall visual.

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RAMS' DEFINITION:

It clarifies the product's structure. Better still, it can make the product talk. At best, it is self-explanatory.

MY INTERPRETATION:

Good design is so simple, it needs no introduction or instruction.



Have you noticed how some interfaces can be so intuitive, a small child can figure it out with no introduction?

This is how I test my design. Give it to a kid. Then give it to your mom.



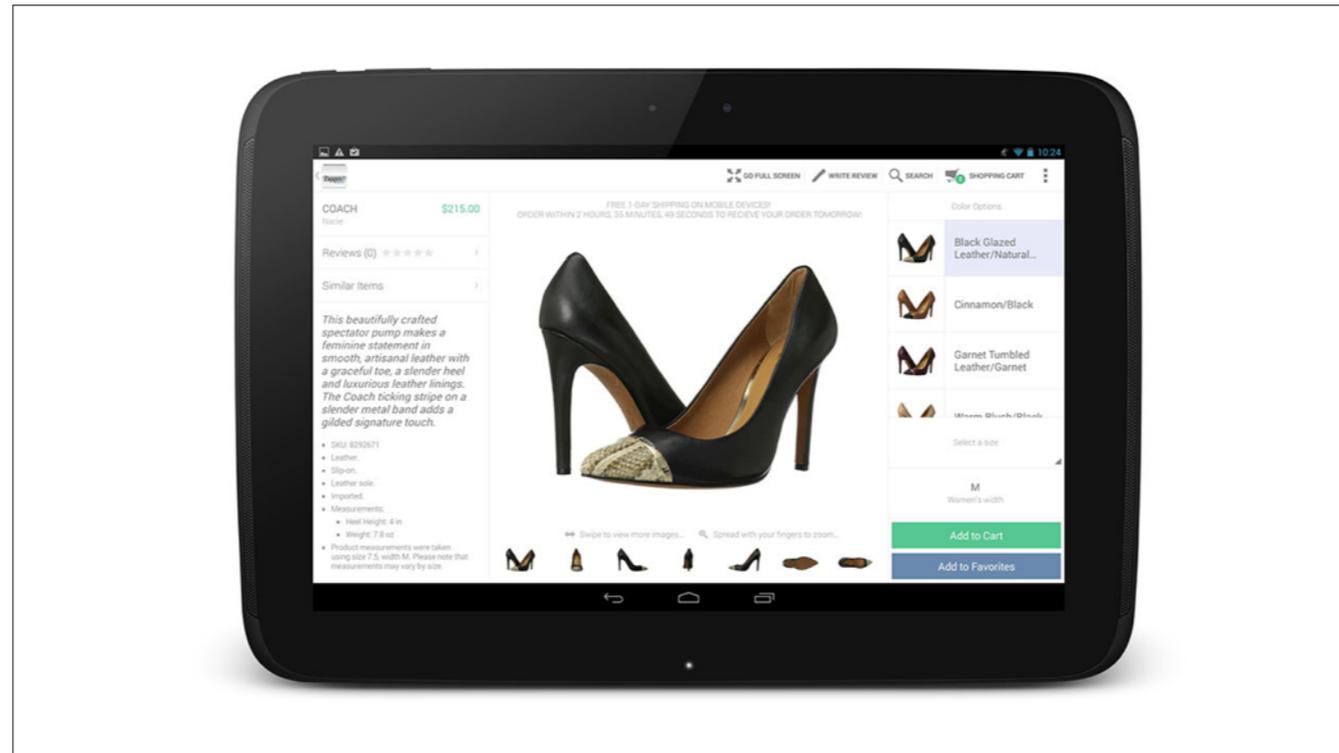
RAMS' DEFINITION:

Products fulfilling a purpose are like tools. They are neither decorative objects nor works of art. Their design should therefore be both neutral and restrained, to leave room for the user's self-expression.

MY INTERPRETATION:

Good design should personalize to the individual user. It should not intrude; it should seamlessly become a part of their life and lifestyle.

Remember the quotation in the beginning from Sir Ive, he said iOS7 "actually elevates your content."

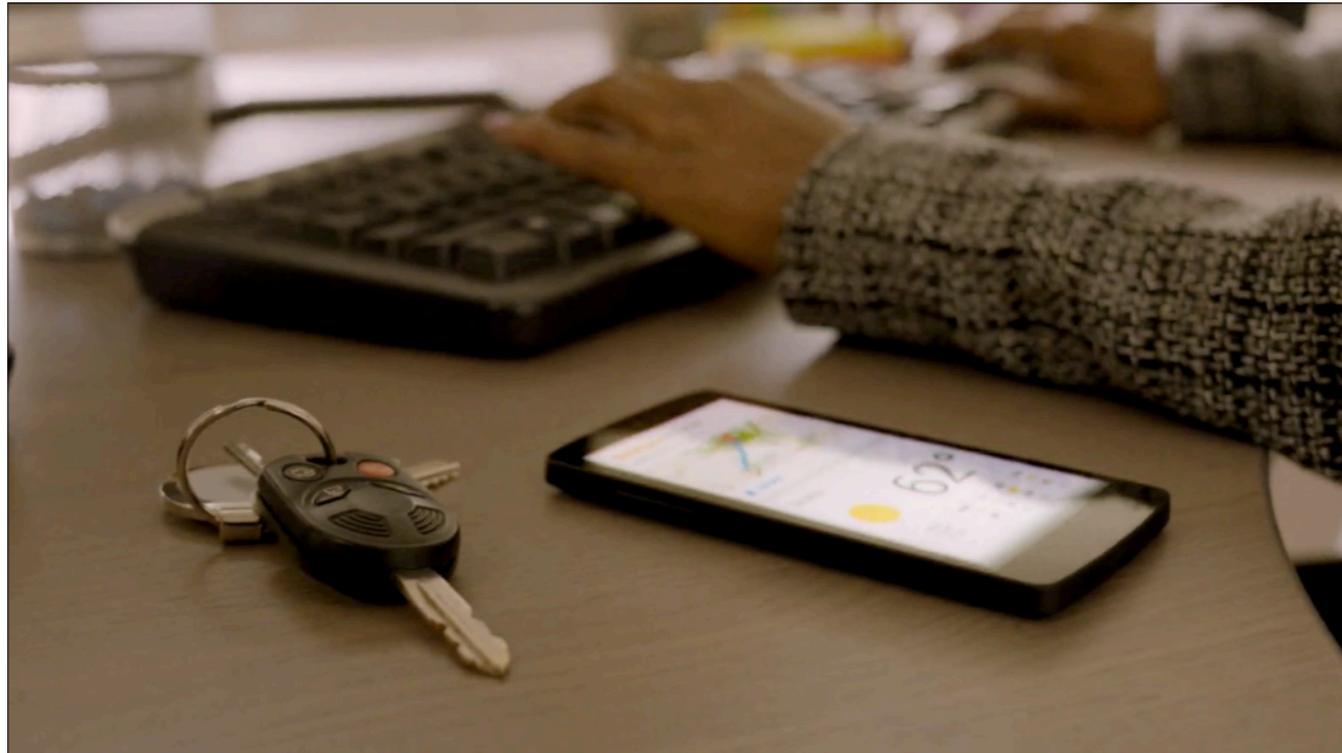


That's something I've tried to do in a different way in my design of the Zappos app for Android tablet. The "design" of the page is unobtrusive. The focus is on the product image. The design elevates the product. Our research shows that the product image is the number one thing a user needs in making a purchase decision.

Other things the user needs, like the product description and selection options are equally unobtrusive, being positioned ergonomically or conveniently in columns at the edge of the screen where the user holds the device. No grip switching is required.



Nest is a great example of “unobtrusiveness.” Its aesthetics are designed to blend in to its environment, but the smart thermostat learns your behavior, so while it blends in to its environment it functions to improve it. In fact, Tony Fadell (founder & CEO of Nest) has remarked that the obtrusiveness of traditional thermostats were one of the main reasons he set out to create Nest.



Google Now is another great example. It is unobtrusive because it uses useful information about you, your interests, your location, your behavior, then makes it available in a very convenient way. This is an example of it providing directions home. It doesn't intrude to ask where home is because it's already learned that. It even shows traffic at a glance and time to get home, because odds are, you also don't need it to intrude in telling you how to get there.



RAMS' DEFINITION:

It does not make a product more innovative, powerful or valuable than it really is. It does not attempt to manipulate the consumer with promises that cannot be kept.

MY INTERPRETATION:

Good design accurately reflects what the thing actually does and its reliability, without a hidden agenda or false pretenses.



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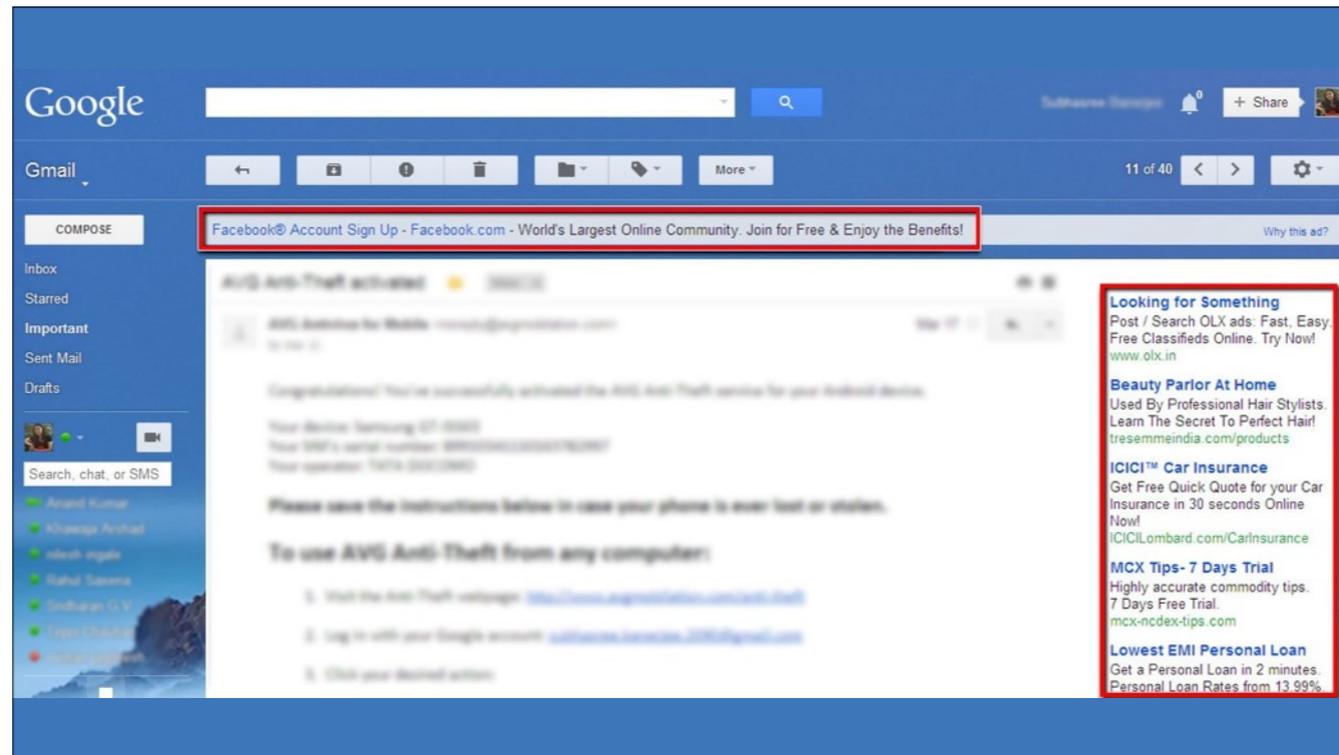
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Its those kinds of experiences that make me feel like I'm living in a Far Side comic! That's obviously not a good user experience.



An example of “dishonesty” could be the way in which Google is reads the email they’ve hosted for free in order to make money serving you ads. To all of us in this room this is no surprise and may not be alarming at all. But it is a deep betrayal to many users, and you probably remember the controversy surrounding their implementation of ads several years ago.



RAMS' DEFINITION:

It avoids being fashionable and therefore never appears antiquated. Unlike fashionable design, it lasts many years – even in today's throwaway society.

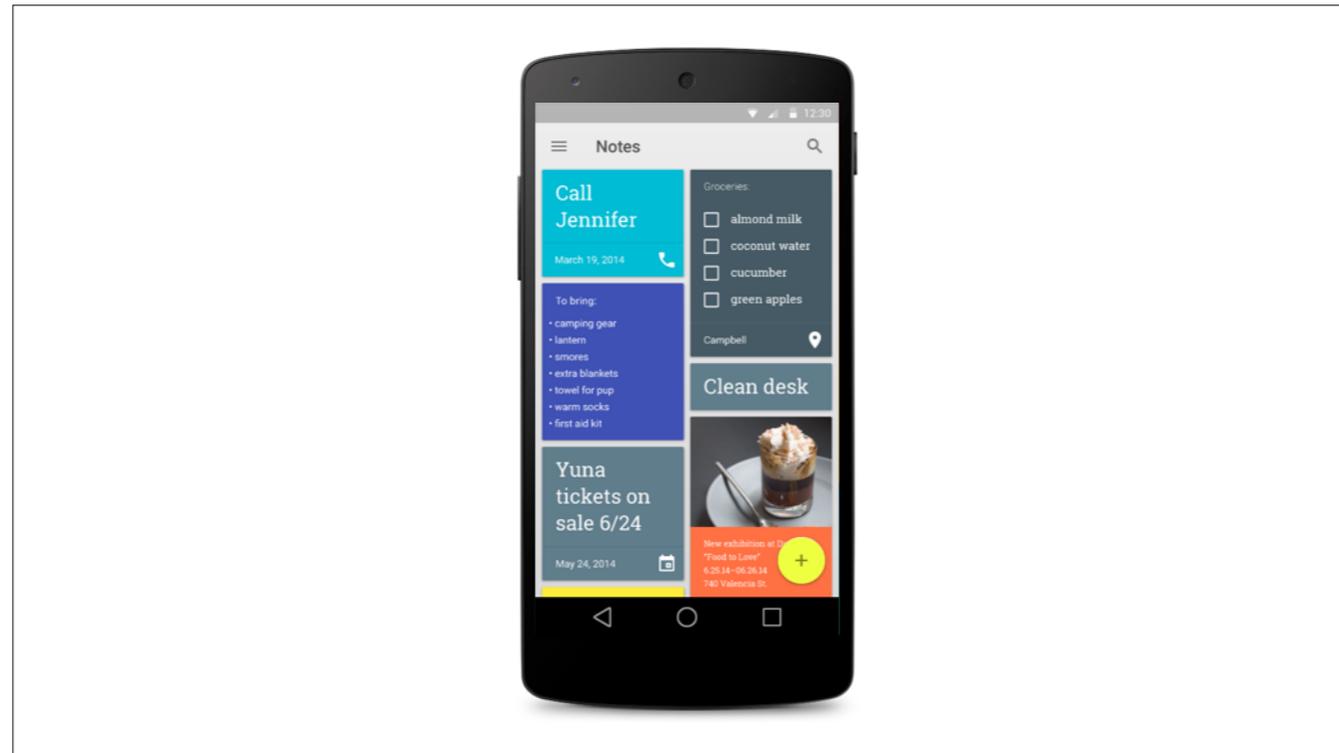
MY COMMENT:

This holds true for digital design as well. Think long term, and think about historical references.



Same design maintained for 7 years.

I realize that Apple forces us to upgrade every year or two, so that's not "long-lasting." But the design is. Notice how the basic design structure has not change much in 7 years.



Google's Material Design emphasizes the use of "Cards" as content components. There's no need to reinvent the wheel, right? Humankind has been righting things down on cards for a long time. It works.



For example..... Charlton Heston exemplifies the divine usefulness of cards.

Think about how you can model traditional objects and functions in your design. Ultimately, it is more simple to your users because, even if it's a new approach, it will make intuitive sense.



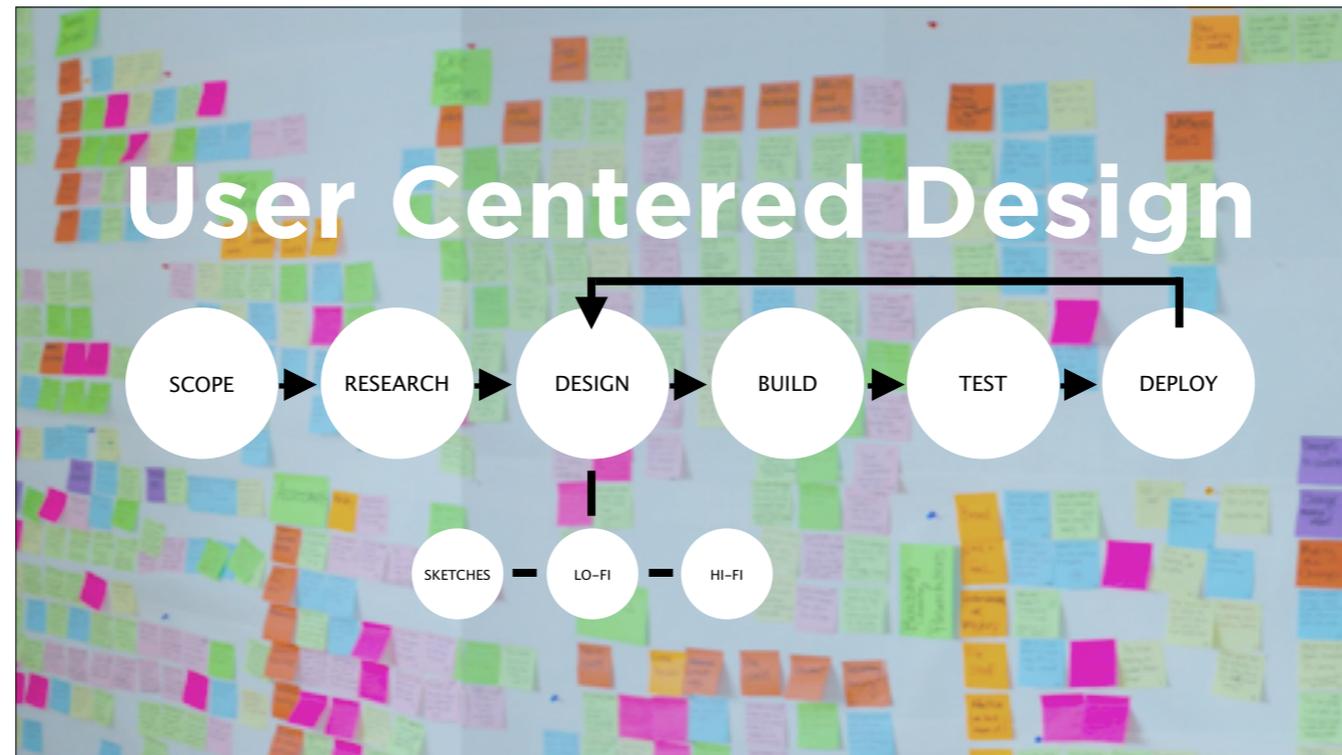
Good Design Is
**Thorough Down to
the Last Detail**

RAMS' DEFINITION:

Nothing must be arbitrary or left to chance. Care and accuracy in the design process show respect towards the consumer.

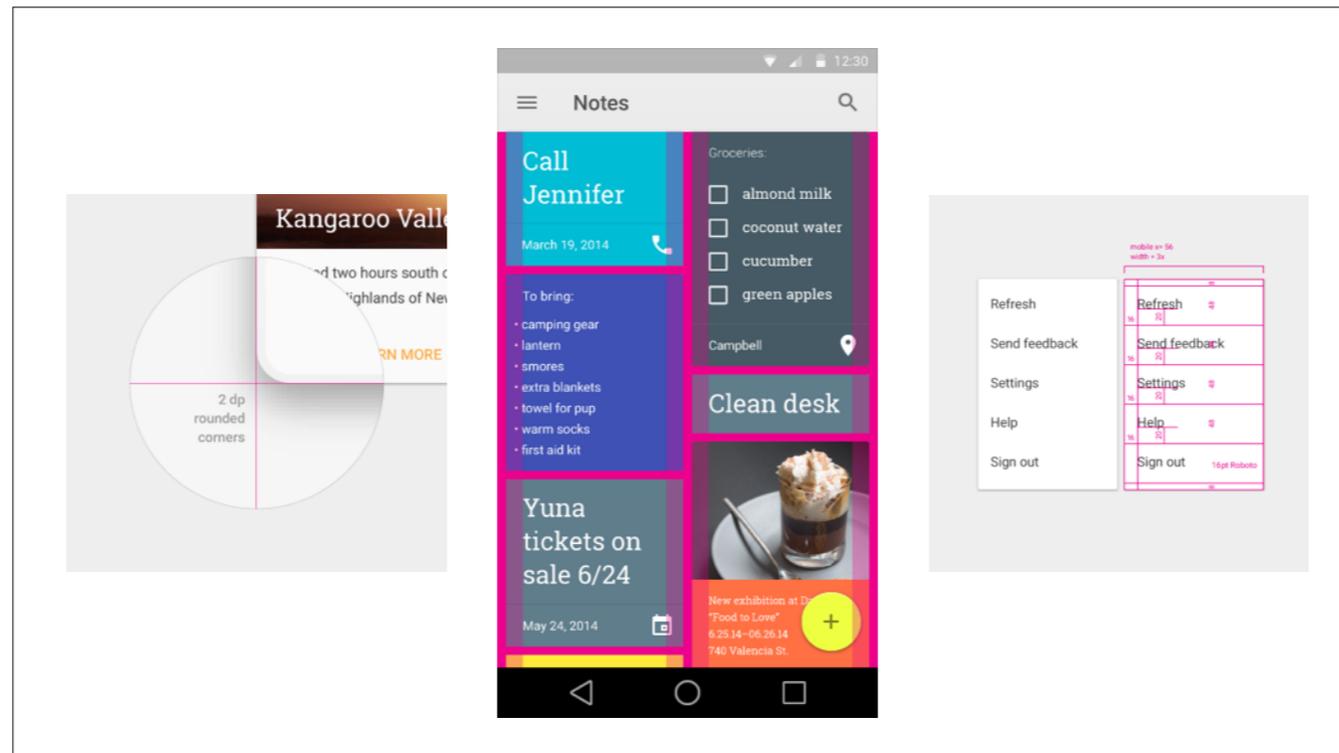
MY COMMENT:

This speaks to process. If you put adequate time and effort into thinking through all the details, then take the time and effort to polish the design, users will notice.



If you're not already familiar with it, dig deep into the User Centered Design process. It will set you up for success, and it will guide you through a process that will help ensure you thoroughly address the user's needs.

<http://blog.twg.ca/2013/05/experiencedesignersinagileteam/>



Design Guidelines are another great resource that will empower you to be thorough down to the last detail. These are examples from Google's recent Material Design Guidelines release. Some people have a natural eye for maintaining consistency and uniformity in visual design, but guidelines can be a big help. If your project is big, complicated, or on the enterprise scale, I would recommend creating your own guidelines to maintain a thorough attention to detail.

<http://www.google.com/design/spec/material-design/introduction.html>



RAMS' DEFINITION:

Design makes an important contribution to the preservation of the environment. It conserves resources and minimizes physical and visual pollution throughout the lifecycle of the product.

MY INTERPRETATION:

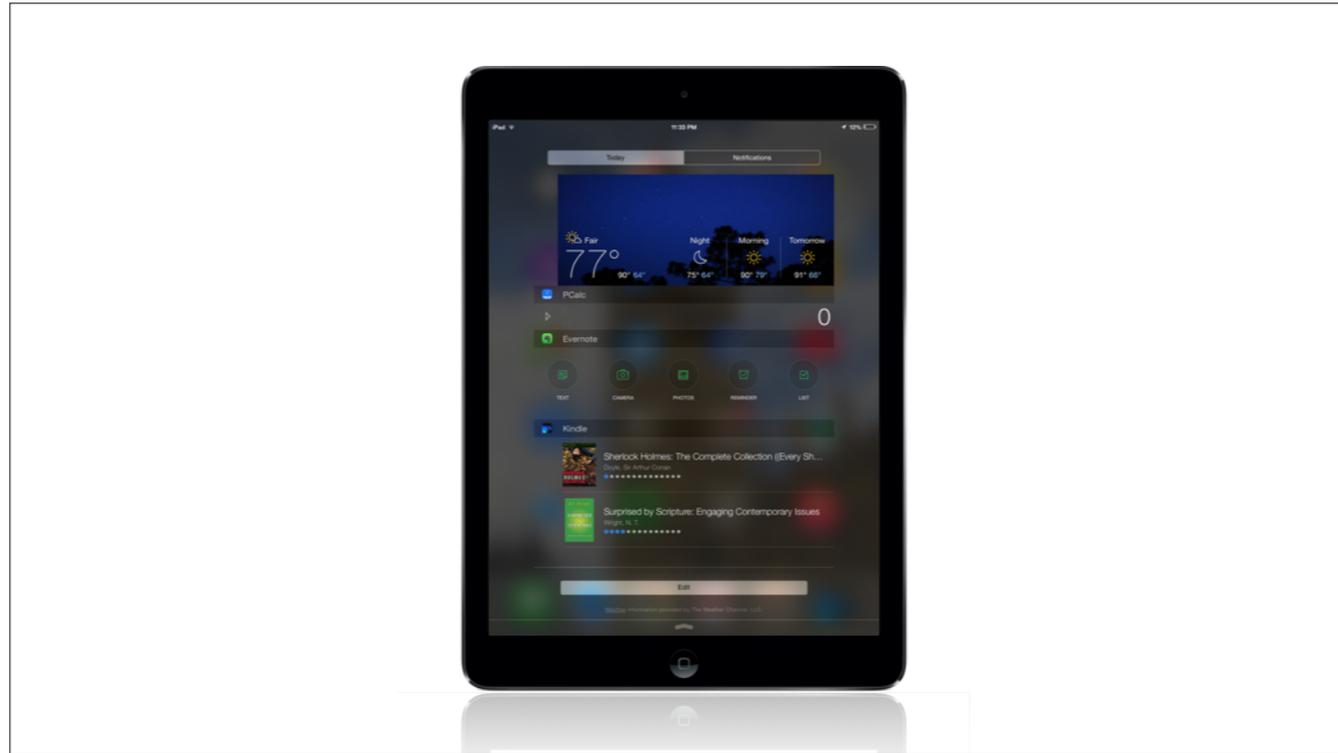
Good design is efficient not only in its use of space, but also in its use of resources. The best design preserves the environment, ultimately sustaining its own vitality.



The Puma “Clever Little Bag” is an award-winning approach to packaging. The materials are recycled, and use of materials is minimal. They’re also reusable.

Pro tip: As a digital designer, if you can find ways to reuse assets, shapes, forms, etc., the engineers you work with will appreciate it!

You can also ostensibly “package” your app in an environmentally friendly way, by looking for opportunities to give users efficient ways to engage with it.



iOS 8's update to the notification center is a huge opportunity for app makers. As the function of apps become more utilitarian, consider how you can make the UX of your app more environmentally friendly.



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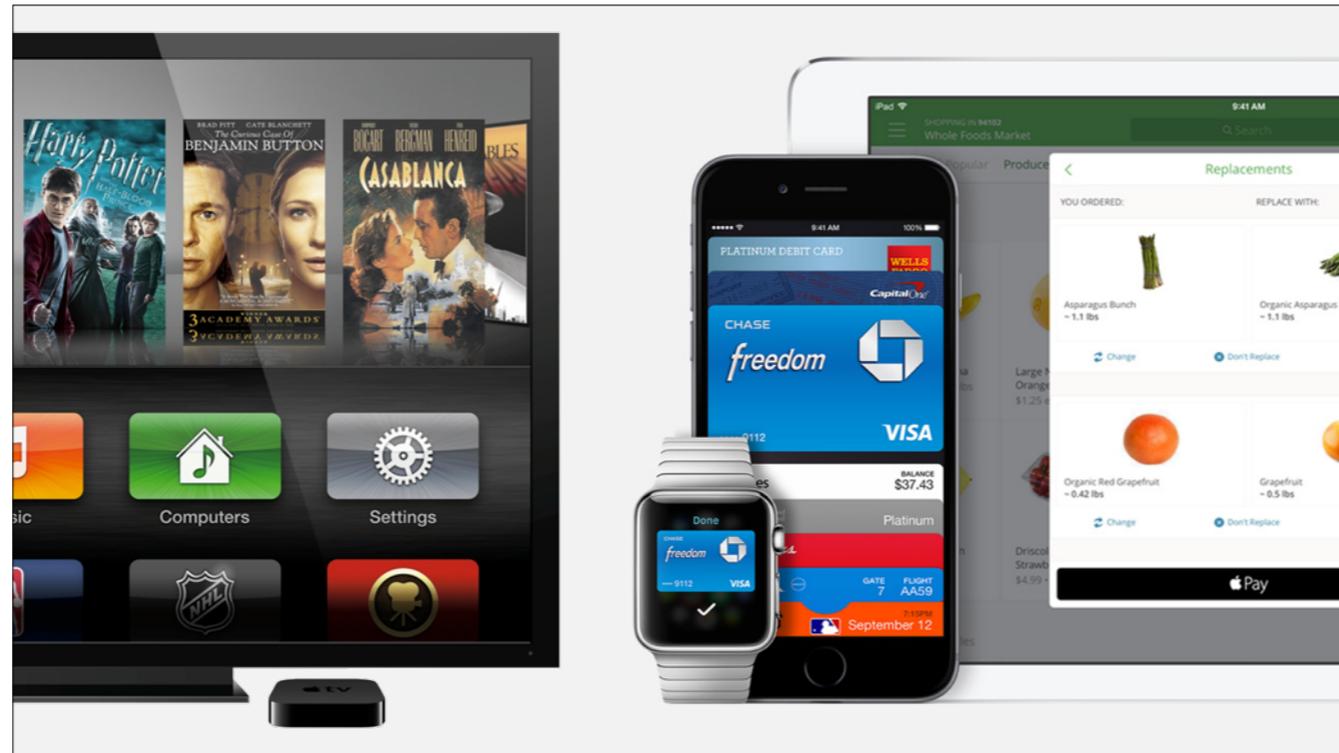
Less, but better – because it concentrates on the essential aspects, and the products are not burdened with non-essentials. Back to purity, back to simplicity.

MY COMMENT:

He also said, "My goal is to omit everything superfluous so that the essential is shown to best possible advantage."

I can tell you from experience that it's very difficult to remove things from an existing design, because usually those things are attached to people... to stakeholders... and they love those things. So it becomes very difficult.

Simplicity is your best strategy.



In today's omniplatform environment, starting simple and keeping things simple is more important than ever. You have to consider how a design or feature will scale up or down from a wearable to a living room environment.

You'll have a very difficult challenge trying to fit the same functionality into a watch that you fit in an iPad, or a desktop PC.

In closing, I have a few comments about working with the 10 principles.



In closing, I have a few comments about working with the 10 principles.

Following these rules should not come at the expense of creativity! By all means, let your creativity run wild... but let the time-tested principles of the old masters be your sidewalks.

Make the design your own.

(Pattern by Ashley Goldberg)

**Remove everything
that is not essential.**

If you're revising an existing design, remove everything that is not essential... item by item...

When I put pen to paper, I start with the most essential element first. As things are added, the bar gets raised... it should become exponentially more difficult to qualify additional elements. The more that is added, the more there is to distract.

Embrace constraints.

Define the scope of the project: deadlines, technology, features. Know exactly what functionality must be depicted on the device, especially if multiple devices. Embrace those constraints, and perhaps even tighten up the project scope a little more.

I don't want to say that if you pare down your list of goals or requirements enough, you'll achieve it every time. But I am saying, if you pare down your list of goals and requirements enough, you're more likely to be successful.

Less, but better.

Why simplicity is your best design strategy.

Like I said at the beginning, you should reflect your company or client's values in your design. Good design testify to who made it. Create design principles that serve each project or feature. I hope Dieter Ram's 10 principles can be helpful too.

- Keep innovation in design on pace with innovation in technology
- Focus on usefulness
- Craft beauty
- Make it so simple, a kid can figure it out.
- Don't intrude, elevate natural living
- Do exactly what you promise it'll do
- Think about the long-term, and what's long-lasting
- The details are everything, but thorough in your process
- Be utilitarian and efficient
- Design as little as possible

That's why simplicity is your best strategy.

Thank you!

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**“If the focus is solving
some really tough problems,
its that process that
yields beautiful objects.”**

–Jony Ive

How to craft a diamond:

1. *Bury carbon dioxide 100 miles into Earth.*
2. *Heat to about 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit.*
3. *Squeeze under pressure of 725,000 pounds per square inch.*
4. *Quickly rush towards Earth's surface to cool.*



How to craft a diamond:

1. Dig deep.

Learn from the past and craft your own solution.

2. Turn up the heat.

Invite scrutiny and refine the design to its maximum purity.

3. Invite Pressure.

Use it to eliminate waste and keep only the essentials.

4. Speed Up.

Take only the time you need. The sooner the product gets to market the better.

