



# THE POWER OF DESIGN

## PART 5: LEADERSHIP

THE POWER OF DESIGN IS A SERIES IN 5 PARTS LOOKING AT THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH DESIGN CAN BE USED WITHIN A COMPANY, CUTTING AWAY HYPERBOLE IN THE TYPICAL DESIGN SALES PITCH AND INVESTIGATING THE REAL BENEFITS OF DESIGN TO CUSTOMERS, THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS REVENUE. THE 5 PARTS DISCUSS INCREMENTAL STEPS: NO DESIGN, STYLE, FORM & FUNCTION, SOLVING BUSINESS PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVING LEADERSHIP.

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Apple bundles everything from hardware to software to online services. And it does all this for a panoply of products from PCs to cellphones, and now to tablet computers. This structure allows Apple to control the quality of customers' experience from soup to nuts, and ends with customer loyalty and a global brand with unparalleled pricing strength.



DESIGN IS not an activity that is owned by designers. It is merely a profitable use of creativity. It can be learnt and applied by anyone in the organization. This is part of its power. Used correctly, design thinking can give any person in the organization a new ability to create dramatically increased value; just like efficiency, quality and customer focus have been able to.

Part of the fuzziness in defining what design actually is, is due to old definitions having outlived their usefulness. Some businesses have come to realize that design is much more than making things look pretty. In many cases a link can be found between how effectively design is used in an organization and the overall success of that organization.

A short list of companies who are undisputed industry leaders could include Nike, Apple, Proctor & Gamble, Nokia, Toyota and Samsung. In each case, success can be attributed to other factors but the influence of design has been integral.

These are companies who aim to be the absolute leaders in their industries; unique and far ahead of their competitors. They have discovered that the tactical ability of solving business problems with design creates successes that can now be knitted together with the emerging culture of innovation to create a strategic tool. For these leaders, design has become integrated into the business as a C-level function.

For companies like this, one finds a hierarchy of design thinking. Firstly a robust design process produces individual products which are carefully considered relative to their competitors. More than that, these products are designed in response to latent user needs and therefore ahead of current thinking. They form part of well-designed product systems which solve business problems. Finally, design thinking is applied in ten areas of business, transforming the organization.

It is this last layer of design thinking that contains the true advantage. Design is not an activity that is owned by designers. It is merely a profitable use

of creativity. It can be learnt and applied by anyone in the organization. This is part of its power. Used correctly, design thinking can give any person in the organization a new ability to create dramatically increased value; just like efficiency, quality and customer focus have been able to.

Design has the ability to create products and experiences that have never existed before. When people all over the organization are thinking in this way, the true originality of their ideas cannot be predicted. Competitors can only follow because the organization is continuously disrupting the field.

Design is not the only way of disrupting the field. Methods like Six Sigma, the Toyota Way and the Theory of Constraints also make the same claim. The difference is that these are all process improvement methods whereas design applies innovation to products and experiences. In fact a good design consultancy will use these and other methods as tools in creating disruptive innovation through design.

Design has a great ability to be used in collaboration with other fields of expertise. That's why it works so well with branding, advertising, engineering and architecture and other fields; to the point that it sometimes becomes indistinguishable from them.

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Tasos Calantzis is the CEO of Terrestrial, an international, South African-based strategic design consultancy that deploys their proven expertise and tools to meet the challenges of globalisation in increasingly competitive markets, especially in Africa. [www.trstrl.com](http://www.trstrl.com)