

Insight

Design Cheats

Deliberate and Inadvertent
Misunderstandings about
Concepts of Design

By Tajrobeh Design Studio | Autumn 2020

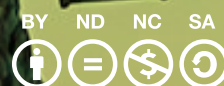
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only about
what we have
experienced
first-hand
and lived
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Words are our fundamental tool for thinking and comprehending our world. Acknowledging the real and genuine value and meaning of words makes our minds and also our personal and social world more clear and illuminated. On the other hand, misusing the words (deliberately or inadvertently), distorts our comprehension of the world and leads to misunderstandings, violence and sometimes, wars!

The Design and Business fields are no different. Design and its literature can be deceiving in various ways. Based on our experiences through multiple design projects for various businesses and clients, we found that designers, managers and people in general can be trapped in multi-faceted and "Chic" words and phrases of the design field.

Here we present some of these misunderstandings and misusing that we have experienced or witnessed first-hand. We guess that some of them are familiar to you.

Design Cheats!

"Surface Design" won't cover for a "Flawed Product"

Designers (mostly) have a profound ability to deceive themselves and others into the state of "Everything's Great". They can present a bad product in a deceiving way, so that it looks lovely and is perceived great. If something is fundamentally wrong, inhumane and harmful, the Graphic Design, Advertising or any other design effort can't justify and save it (maybe just for a short period of time).

Brand Design and Advertising won't cover a bad product.

Graphic Design and Packaging won't cover a bad-flavored tea.

A "Nice Presentation" won't make up for "Delivering Real Value"

A "Chic" (or as one friend used to say, "Hypnotizing") presentation won't replace a bad or mediocre design with a real and effective design. Some clients don't have the ability to distinguish a bad design from an effective one (and maybe we shouldn't expect everyone to recognize all the qualitative aspects of designs). So some designers present their ideas in such a manipulative way, so that it overpromises the real value and quality of their ideas and designs.

It takes some time for the client to find out that the designs are not as effective as promised by the designer, but as one of our so-called designer colleagues used to say, "we will get away with our money by that time"!

Management Cheats

"Design" won't make up for "Brand Management"

You can't skip resource management and business development just because you have designed a product or service. Design Management is one thing and Product Management is another thing. Having a "Design" doesn't mean that you have a "Business".

"Design Process and Designing a Process" won't make up for "Real Actions" and getting the job done

The process of design, ideation, prototyping, testing and other stages of creating a product can be easily deceiving and create the illusion of "Working a Business". All these steps help to elevate the overall qualities of the outputs of organization, but won't replace them!

Designing something is one thing, Implementing it is something else.

"Outsourcing" won't make up for "Responsibility"

You can't assume that everything is done and taken care of, just because you hired a design agency. You should be a pro-active part of the design team. You have to participate in the design endeavor, so you'll have a sense of belonging to the final outputs. You can't outsource growth.

Creativity and design won't make up for the courage to action.

Brand Guidelines Manual won't make up for Design Consulting.

Design Consulting won't make up for the Design Project. You can't consider the Design process done, just because you held some Design Consulting Sessions.

"Design" won't make up for "Marketing and Sales"

Don't expect the outcomes of your marketing and sales team from your design team. Good design is essential to market and sell a product easier and better (in some contexts, it's not even essential, unfortunately or fortunately), but it's not enough.

Expanding your market share depends on various elements such as pricing, distribution networks, brand positioning and number of other elements. You can't expect more sales just because you hired a designer and redesigned your product.

Cognitive Cheats

"Personal Branding" won't make up for "Character"

"Personal Branding" is a buzzword these days and we witness too many activities from people trying to achieve a "Personal Brand". But it's rare to see and experience some "real and genuine value" that goes beyond "Self". It's more suitable for of a comedy, rather than critics :)

Fashion design won't cover a weak, inapt and non-sticky character.

Styling won't make up for politeness and manners.

You can't use a pair of Jeans and a turtleneck to copy Steve Jobs's genius. Pretending being "distracted" and "genius" won't make up for Elon Musk's road to success.

"Job Position" won't replace "Expertise"

If someone introduces himself or herself as "Design Manager", doesn't necessarily mean that he or she is a design expert (or any kind of expert). It's a common misunderstanding that many people introduce themselves based on their position not expertise.

In a friendly gathering some time ago - in which I knew only a few - guests started to introduce themselves to the whole group. The titles were like these: "Development Director at X corporation", "Creative Director at Y studio". No one mentioned their specific expertise.

Same job position (for example "Creative Director") may demand different set of skills and expertise in different companies and organizations.

"Having Opinion" about something doesn't mean being a "Pundit"

You can't be a pundit just because you think about something and have personal opinions about it.

Having personal theories and taste won't make up for the Design Process.

Making personal comments from a managerial standpoint won't make up for "Detail Design"! Managers' opinions and Users' feedbacks would be just a Veto right if they don't get synthesized through the design process with other inputs, gathered and generated by the design team. Having a Veto right won't make up for "Leading and Managing".

"Creativity" won't make up for "Design"

The same way that "Ideation" won't make up for "Creativity" (It's a part of creative journey, but it's not all of it). Design Processes are much more complicated than just "ideation" and "being creative".

"Having a taste" won't replace "Styling"

"Having a nice taste" won't make up for "Aesthetic Exploring and Experimenting".

"Search" won't make up for "Research"

Being able to use Google doesn't mean that you are a researcher.

"Design Thinking" won't make up for "Design Expertise" and "Designing"

You can't Design just by "Thinking". Senses, emotions, feelings, intuition, creative forces, multi-dimensional synthesizing, and some other internal and external resources - which may not even have a name - are at play in the design process.

"CHIC" Cheats

"Nice Design" won't make up for "Relevant Design"

"Content Design and Presentation" won't make up for "Real and Genuine Value Proposition" of the brand. You can't hide the shortages and incompetencies of your product or service, just because you have a great website or Instagram page.

Designing digital services and accessibilities won't replace genuine human touch and feelings.

Visual merchandising and store design won't make up for "Being Fair". The same way that bogus smile on salespeople won't make up for a genuine encounter of the brand with its customers.

Designing Public Street furniture won't make up for "Civilian Rights" (though it's a sign of it). Urban Green Space Design won't replace Polluting Vehicles.

Living in a house that has Sophisticated Roman and Hellenistic column capitals doesn't mean that you have a Genuine Lifestyle!

Strategic Cheats

"Economic Interest (Rente)" won't make up for "Marketing"

If a very powerful oligarch friend gave you (as some of them call it) a "Fat" Design Project, doesn't mean that you have a great Marketing Department.

"Design Education" won't make up for "Design Learning"

Education is achieved in schools, but learning happens through the real projects in the real working arena. There is a difference between someone that becomes a design spokesman by reading 40 design books, and someone that changes the world (even a little bit) through 40 design projects.

Design knowledge won't make up for Design Expertise.

Not every "Designing" is a "Design Project"

If my uncle sends me a request to design a single page A5 pamphlet for his local bank branch, it doesn't mean that I can put the logo of that bank in my resume.

A "Design Project" is not a "Design Business"

There is a difference between "being into something" and "being into business of something". Design as a profession demands a credit capital that should be achieved through encountering and working with multiple business clients through time. Doing a few design projects with no real economic approach, won't create a Design Business. Being a Well-Established Designer demands hard work and challenging experiences in a long run.

This list of usual cheats is far more than the ones presented here. There are various reasons for these cheats to happen. Misunderstanding, misusing, bad management, the obsession for finding short-cuts for success and etc.

Like cavemen who used to think (imagine) that they could capture the soul and strength of animals through drawing their pictures on the walls of the cave, we, nowadays, might imagine that we can capture the strength of the words through just speaking them. But that's not how it works. Knowing the real values and functions of any word and concept, helps us to have a clear and truthful approach for doing our role in this life.

The most powerful tool and approach to use any concept in its proper place and position, is our ability to have a genuine encounter with life and work (the most difficult thing to do in life).

Let's create a better and brighter world for ourselves and the generations to come, through a genuine and truthful encounter.

We write only about
what we have experienced first-hand
and lived genuinely.

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