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Make It New: The History Of Silicon Valley Design



Barry M. Katz



Synopsis

California's Silicon Valley is home to the greatest concentration of designers in the world: corporate design offices at flagship technology companies and volunteers at nonprofit NGOs; global design consultancies and boutique studios; research laboratories and academic design programs. Together they form the interconnected network that is Silicon Valley. Apple products are famously "designed in California", but, as Barry Katz shows in this first-ever, extensively illustrated history, the role of design in Silicon Valley began decades before Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak dreamed up Apple in a garage. Offering a thoroughly original view of the subject, Katz tells how design helped transform Silicon Valley into the most powerful engine of innovation in the world. From Hewlett-Packard and Ampex in the 1950s to Google and Facebook today, design has provided the bridge between research and development, art and engineering, technical performance and human behavior. Katz traces the origins of all of the leading consultancies - including IDEO, frog, and Lunar - and shows the process by which some of the world's most influential companies came to place design at the center of their business strategies. At the same time, universities, foundations, and even governments have learned to apply "design thinking" to their missions. Drawing on unprecedented access to a vast array of primary sources and interviews with nearly every influential design leader - including Douglas Engelbart, Steve Jobs, and Don Norman - Katz reveals design to be the missing link in Silicon Valley's ecosystem of innovation.

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Customer Reviews

Lots of great nuggets in here, and reminders of how many pioneers we owe a debt of gratitude. But a little mixed up organizationally, leaves a lot out, and is a little too much like a laundry list of people and accomplishments. But important history to know; I'm glad someone started to capture.

Most people know about Silicon Valley's success and some have heard about the part design played in its rise but its history has never been fully documented until now. Barry Katz reveals what it actually took for design to evolve from a subservient position to engineering and marketing into a core competency for innovative companies designing products that people actually want to buy. "Design Thinking" is now a recognized strategy and a methodology to frame ANY problem from a design perspective and the credit goes to those design pioneers who fought the good fight...

I read Barry Katz' "Make It New" this weekend. It's the history of design in Silicon Valley and shows how designs started as improvements to functionality at HP and evolved at Apple into overall design not just of the computer's case but the entire product, the product line, all products, and the company itself. If you care about design or corporate strategy, you must read this book. It shows how Silicon Valley design is becoming global design. The author is a professor of design at Stanford and has been deeply involved in SV design. I've lived and worked 20 years in Silicon Valley; the book had lots of details about SV that I didn't know. It was published by MIT Press and came out this past Sept.

This is a wonderfully well written book that gives us deep insight into the evolution of design thinking. I am suggesting to all of our USBCT clients that participate in our Design Thinking workshops here in Taiwan. I think they will find it very useful as Taiwan now seeks to build and brand its own products and services and sell/market to a global, multicultural audience.

The uncanny thing that Katz manages to do over and over again in Make It New is collapse the past, present, and future of design in Silicon Valley and make it feel like the challenges of a Carl Clement or a Bill Moggridge are structurally the same as designers face today, with the kind of historical mechanics and déjà vu feeling of an eternal return. Full disclosure: I am a software designer in the Bay Area, and I can't imagine anyone writing a more valuable book to simultaneously normalize and exalt the experience of being a team player in this heady aesthetic, cultural, and economic foment. When I read, for example, that Moggridge ran an

informance on Bastille Day in 1992 at an Interval Research offsite retreat which explored a rapidly unfolding geopolitical crisis in the Middle East as played out in real time on an interactive Video Wall. I felt like I was stepping into a river of discovery that stretches across space and time. By wading into this river, which is a daily occurrence for anyone doing software / hardware design, we're buoyed by collective flow of creativity that runs through the design communities that now flourish in the Valley of Heart's Delight, as the Silicon Valley was once known. But the lessons of Make It New reach beyond the design community and the Bay Area, for that matter. And if there was one takeaway that businesses should make standard operating procedure the world over, this quote sums it up: "What we did at Interval, Liddle said, 'was to introduce design ideas at the earliest stage of the product development process, rather than bring them in for an inspirational jolt at the beginning or cosmetic refinement at the end.' I can hear designers from the global community saying: 'Make it so.'"

So much of the reading material about innovation in Silicon Valley is understandably facing perpetually forward. Reading Prof. Katz book opened my mind to the understanding and admiration of the hundreds of lives and events that have been woven together throughout the history of the region by shedding light on the role that designers, financiers and engineers have played TOGETHER in creating the fertile soil from which the world's biggest innovation engine sprouted. Thank you Prof. Katz for your dedication to be a chronicler of human's creativity during these incredibly fast paced times.

Barry Katz is the most knowable person I know on the topic of design history and philosophy. I immensely enjoyed reading 'Make it New' over Easter. It seems very well researched and comprehensive with an excellent balance of broad overview and illustrative examples, as well as, enlightening gold nuggets. The fact that Barry has live in Silicon Valley for decades where he has consulted in and taught design history means that he actually know many of the personalities he describes. Finally, his poised writing style makes the book a pleasure to read for its crisp language and to the point style. I highly recommend this book to any business professional, creative, tech person, - he or she being student, novice, or expert. - Sincerely, Soren

This book is a gem! Barry uses his deep knowledge, clear insights, and sharp tongue to show and explain the evolution of Silicon Valley design. Those who come from the world of design will

undoubtedly recognize many characters and events, and find in this book a web of connections that helps make sense of the explosive impact design has had on our world. For those who are looking to make sense of leading-edge innovation, and just learning about design thinking, this book will serve as a solid platform for building an understanding of the fuel that propels Silicon Valley's leading companies. You're probably reading these words on a device that was born out of the synergy of design and technology that was unique to Silicon Valley. For those who are curious and want to learn why products are designed the way they are, this informative and delightful book is a must!

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