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### Design Rules

Everywhere you look today — from buildings and landscapes, to commercial products and public services, to Web sites and print products — design has taken on new meaning. Design isn't just about decoration; it's a critical component of how we communicate, collaborate, and compete. But behind the "look and feel" of any good design are a host of carefully conceived principles: fundamental propositions that define the essence of design. The trick for all businesspeople today is to learn those underlying rules — to think like designers — creators buildings, furniture, products, Web sites, costumes, and labels — to deconstruct something that exemplifies great design to them. More important, we asked them to tell us what we can learn about the art of design. Read their thoughts, and then take out a sketchbook and designing your own world.

Design is not so much about the end product as it is about the process. This is especially true for design in the world of the Web, where you can't even talk about the design of an immutable, static object. Instead, you focus on a sequential, ongoing activities — a series of interactions and experiences. But more important, whether you're talking about design in real time or Net time, the days of the solo designer independently creating an artifact or an experience are gone. The world is too complex. Taking an idea to its ultimate expression requires the effort of the entire team — a multidisciplinary effort.

And ultimately, any well-designed product or experience acknowledges the user. It's that respect for the user that makes a design great. That's true for a table, a chair, a book, a film, or a Web site.

A real-time product that exemplifies consideration for the user is Herman Miller's Aeron chair. The design process stretched over a three-year period and involved intense collaboration of the entire team of designers, engineers, suppliers, and marketers. Their collective goal: Understand the users and their expectations. That cross-disciplinary approach helped them design the right solution. When that chair came out in the 1990s, it looked like it was designed for Robocop, and it looked anything but comfortable. But concern for the user motivated every design decision — and that allowed the team to have confidence in their creation.