10 principles for design that could save the world

Every designer has heard of Dieter Rams. His famous Ten Principles for Good Design are world renown and have been a key consideration in the design of many products we know and recognise today. However, they were written in 1976 – a world without the internet, at a time when climate change wasn't in the daily headlines.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Design is everywhere. After all, if a product is not grown, it's designed by someone: from the car you drive and the coffee mug you use every day, to the laptop or phone you're reading this article on. As the founder of an industrial design agency, I personally find myself thinking more and more about this, and the responsibility designers have to positively influence the world around them, as well as people's choices and behaviour.

With that in mind, I was inspired to rewrite Dieter Rams' famous *10 Principles* to better suit today's world, and touch on what happens when designers think only about what they 'can' do, and not about what they 'should'. The below principles question the reason for things to exist and explore what the world might look like if they didn't.

1. Good design has a reason to exist

Due to the irresponsible consumption of natural resources, our community shouldn't be designing for design's sake, instead every

product must have a valid reason to be brought into the world. We, as designers, must consider the rationale for each aspect of that product throughout the design and manufacturing process.

2. Good design is inclusive

We live in a world where the vast majority of the products we interact with are designed by men. For example, cars are 71% less safe for women because crash test dummies are based on the male physique, and something ever more relevant is that PPE puts women at risk as it is designed for men, even though 75% of the NHS staff force are women.

This problem isn't exclusively a gender issue and it's not exclusively about safety. A wider range of viewpoints is likely to identify more challenges and opportunities not just for improving sustainability, but for meeting the needs of a wider audience. Universal design can only be achieved by getting a range of voices in the room, questioning how we could improve the users' experience and seeing things from a wider perspective.

3. Good design is built on honesty

Honesty and transparency are key, between manufacturer, designer, brand and consumer. We need to be able to understand the environmental implications of the decisions that we make in order to take responsibility for them.

4. Good design is thorough through to end-of-life

Design considers both the creation, use and destruction of products and works to minimise the impact of each aspect.

One of my favourite pieces of design from the past year is the _Beosound Level_ wireless speaker. Designed with considerations for repair and upgradeability, the speaker can be taken apart and battery and electronics modules replaced as wireless technologies evolve. The additional benefit of this design for disassembly is that should the user not want to keep the speaker, the parts can be responsibly recycled or used in future models. This attention to detail has earned them _Cradle to Cradle Certification._

A leader in the audio industry, B&O has consistently put out beautifully considered products for almost a century. Hopefully the industry will take note of this latest move into more sustainable design, and we will see more brands taking the same approach.

5. Good design is designed for appropriate lifespan

Design should be long-lasting when there is likelihood of it remaining relevant and desirable by the user. In which case companies should avoid trends, and instead design for upgrade or adaptability. Otherwise, design for a finite life and ensure that the product does not remain on the planet forever.

For example, plastic stick deodorants are designed for 3 months use, but made from materials that will last for hundreds of years. We worked with Wild to develop the world's first plastic-free deodorant refill that is completely compostable and works with a reusable case. So once the paper pulp refill gets used up, it will disappear completely in a matter of months and the case that you keep is designed to last. As it should be.

NOTE: The Wild Deodorant Case was awarded Gold in Sustainable Design at the Pentawards 2021.

6. Good design is intuitive

Over complicated design features and functionality which confuse the user, or require prior knowledge, prevent the user from using the product and passing it on to someone else. As designers, we should be thinking about how the consumer will interact with the product and design for their experience and understanding.

7. Good design is user <u>and</u> planet-centred

Whilst we design for people, if we do not put the needs of our planet at the centre of our design process, we are effectively putting those same people at risk.

A brand to watch doing this incredibly well is _Biohm_. Inspired by biomimicry, this team of scientists, designers and engineers is developing materials and manufacturing processes that give to the environment rather than take from it. One example is the mycelium-based insulation panels they have created that actually consume organic and synthetic waste in the production process. This will revolutionise the construction industry, which is notoriously destructive, wasteful and polluting.

Another material innovation comes in the form of their obscure range of lampshades. Made from orange peel and coffee waste, each lamp is cold-compostable, 100% natural and captures up to 3kg of carbon.

8. Good design encourages positive behaviour change

The influence of our work should extend beyond its use, we should endeavour to affect positive behaviour change in our users.

9. Good design is beautiful

Designs should bring joy to the user both through aesthetic and user experience.

10. Good design is considered down to the last detail

The level of care and attention to detail in an object is apparent and results in an affinity and an appreciation that builds a longer lasting relationship between the user and the product.

There is a reason that Apple sweeps up the design awards each year. The synergy between the design, manufacture and assembly has resulted in flawless products year after year. As the creative director of a design agency, I hear the words '*more like Apple*' from clients on a weekly basis. The brand's products are loved and coveted by the users and the result is a loyal following that rarely stray. Because of this, the trade-in scheme ensures that Apple can collect products at the end of life and recycle or refurbish them so that they don't end up in landfill.

Behind every product or service there is a designer who thought of the idea and took this idea from imaginary thoughts to the final product. Design is a crucial aspect of sustainable development, but we cannot work alone to solve the world's problems and overcome future challenges. The design community should educate its clients about the

importance of designing products with our planet in mind, and hopefully by following these principles, we can reach our goal of saving the world.

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