

Design vs. Redesign Pt.1

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"You can use an eraser on the drafting table or a sledge hammer on the construction site." -- Frank Lloyd Wright

Recently, I spoke with a recruiter who was sweating bullets over finding appropriate candidates for a position she was trying to fill. On the surface, it didn't sound like she was looking for the impossible so I didn't understand what her problem was. I asked her to send me the role description, so I could get some better insight. At first glance, it seemed fairly straightforward...

- Knowledge of User Centered Design principles, usability methodologies, software development processes
- Prototyping skills
- 5+ years experience in commercial software design (Windows and web-based)
- Proven skill with Visio
- Team player… ...you know, all the standard stuff. I was starting to wonder why the woman was having problems finding someone. And then it jumped out at me..."Must have significant experiencing designing v1 products."

Ahh, there's the problem.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking on the company. I am in fact thrilled that a company is out there looking for a UX person to come in and work on their product from its inception. I'm just saying that they're a rarity, and that's why this recruiter is having so many issues finding candidates the company finds acceptable.

Why? Because most software is designed by developers or business/product owners. It's redesigned by UX and UI professionals...after it's already been released and then, predictably, fails.

Granted, we're not exactly cheap, but it's way more expensive to completely develop and release a failed product and then undergo a redesign (because it's not just a redesign--it's also rebuilding, re-testing, and re-deploying...and now pause to think about the number of customers that aren't going to give you a second chance because you screwed them the first time around) than it is to get it mostly right from the beginning and just refine and expand over time.

Want to avoid the hell, and more often than not budget-crippling expense, of a redesign? (I'm going to assume you're nodding emphatically, or at least saying a silent "yes" inside of your head to put the wails of the crying lambs to rest.) Here's your answer: Put some time into good design up front. What does that mean? I'll break it down for you over the next few days...

(Read Design vs. Redesign Part 2 - What Does It Mean? now.)