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Mental Models



Synopsis

There is no single methodology for creating the perfect product – but you can increase your odds. One of the best ways is to understand users’ reasons for doing things. Mental Models gives you the tools to help you grasp, and design for, those reasons. Adaptive Path co-founder Indi Young has written a roll-up-your-sleeves book for designers, managers, and anyone else interested in making design strategic, and successful.

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Customer Reviews

Indi Young’s approach to conceptualizing and representing an outside-in view of market needs and their relationship to company capabilities is a compelling thinking and communication tool. I look forward to leveraging her work to help my clients. Must read for anyone driving enterprise-level change for companies.

I didn’t get much from reading this. Some examples pictures don’t reproduce well in kindle. there is mention of red text that isn’t red.

From product development to Website development Indi's work in this book is extremely detail and comprehensive. The book will help you define a model of how and why the various behavior groups think. You can then define the gaps between this model and your current design, to your proposed design, and your business goals. A great strategic tool to map out a product roadmap and strategy. Jim Mandas - Customer Experience consultant.

I never really enjoy using only one process to understand a situation, but rather I believe that using a bunch of different techniques to try to gain insight from a variety of perspectives. This book focuses on one very specific way to build a "mental model," and goes into extreme detail into how to do this. I read this book, and I know for sure that I can walk off and do this, but I also wish that rather than going into mind numbing depth in certain areas ("here's how to build a spread sheet that does this") and instead went into more depth of the "why" of the methods used. I would definitely use this book to think of a new way to process and address interviews, but I also think that this model takes into account mainly behavior, and can't really address the needs of products in complete breakout categories that address totally unaddressed needs of consumers.

This book new book from Rosenfeld Media will enlighten us how to organize thoughts. And the words of Indi Young has a good way to show us that.

The sellers contacted me to see if the book was delivered. It hadn't but they responded very politely and with concern. I have now received the book. It was well packaged and in the expected condition. Great service - no fuss and they were onto the delay very comprehensively. Well done.

Coming from a background qualitative research in an academic context, I am delighted to have a thorough guide of how to analyse similar kinds of data in an actionable way. This book provides some theory but assumes the understanding the user research is important. It is a step-by-step, comprehensive guide of how to carry out the method of Mental Models in real projects. I especially like that Indi takes into account variable situations practitioners might face and weighs different shortcuts and approaches based on these situations. For example, she explains what to do if you are keen to create a mental model on a project but have no stakeholder support. This is brilliant because a lot of online guides aren't as grounded in reality and tend to leave you convinced but empty-handed. This book is not a theoretical exploration of a topic or a poetic argument for user

experience, so do not buy it if you're looking for that kind of inspiration. What is it good for is a hands-on guide for conducting user research in a way that's based on delivering a long-term, deep, and productive understanding of an organisation and a way to analyse or create a product. It focuses on generative research (done to uncover a mental context a user/customer is in, not to test a particular product). The book provides guidance and advice for each step of the process, and anything lacking in the book is explained in the appendices. I found the appendix that covers the cost and duration of such a project particularly useful because I was able to provide my employer with an idea of the investment we are expecting to make by transforming our method to this approach. There are some things that might make it easier for you to enjoy the book or find it useful: it helps if you have some understanding of how to listen to people or some experience conducting ethnographic interviews, it definitely helps if your organisation/employer is open to change or adopting new strategies. I can see how a very stiff work environment would make this book frustrating. I got immediately fascinated by the idea of trying this out, and it was brilliant to find my manager as excited. Nevertheless, the book provides some advice even for those working in a very large organisation. I should mention that I also attended Indi Young's workshop on the methods in this book. When I left, I was definitely convinced that--if done right--this method can produce amazingly rich insights and drive design, product improvements, organisational business strategy, and anything else that requires understanding how particular people work. Some of the other reviews mention "fluff" and empty filler words. I also found the many quotations quite tedious but they did not reduce my opinion of the usefulness of the book. Perhaps the feeling that some sections are too detailed or obvious comes from a difference in expertise. The book is definitely written for practitioners of all levels so those who have been doing UX for over ten years will definitely find some sections to be repetitive. I should also say that I find the process of getting started quite difficult. This is not a quick fix or a magic pill but a detailed method that requires understanding, learning, and practice. The book has left me feeling that I can accomplish all three.

I'm not sure I like the way Young uses the term mental model. To me, a mental model is first and foremost the way that an individual thinks a system or a part of the world works. An example from Don Norman that rang true for me: My understanding of how my home AC unit works. I set it/use it based on that model, even if it's completely wrong. I developed my model of how it works based on a variety of things, which may not include any actual basis in how it truly works. As a designer, it is helpful to understand a person's mental model for something so that you can map to it as appropriate to help people understand how to use your product. What Young approaches in this

book is something much broader: She provides a start-to-finish approach to documenting the way a whole group of people relate to your product space - their needs, tasks, and perspectives. She provides great detail in how to proceed, including literal instructions for your spreadsheet, etc. This then leads to larger insights about product (or product line) strategy, which is useful (but seems off the mark of mental models, to me). I found this book a bit heavy on quotations and task instructions, a little light on Young's personal insights. This might have held up better as a chapter in a book on user research methods (i.e., Kuniavsky's book).

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