



Design to Thrive: Creating Social Networks and Online Communities that Last

By Tharon Howard



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Social networks and online communities are reshaping the way people communicate, both in their personal and professional lives. What makes some succeed and others fail? What draws a user in? What makes them join? What keeps them coming back? Entrepreneurs and businesses are turning to user experience practitioners to figure this out. Though they are well-equipped to evaluate and create a variety of interfaces, social networks require a different set of design principles and ways of thinking about the user in order to be successful.

Design to Thrive presents tried and tested design methodologies, based on the author's decades of research, to ensure successful and sustainable online communities -- whether a wiki for employees to share procedures and best practices or for the next Facebook. The book describes four criteria, called "RIBS," which are necessary to the design of a successful and sustainable online community. These concepts provide designers with the tools they need to generate informed creative and productive design ideas, to think proactively about the communities they are building or maintaining, and to design communities that encourage users to actively contribute.

- Provides essential tools to create thriving social networks, helping designers to avoid common pitfalls, avoid costly mistakes, and to ensure that communities meet client needs
- Contains real world stories from popular, well known communities to illustrate how the concepts work
- Features a companion online network that employs the techniques outlined in the book

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book provides the necessary antidote to the thoughtless, random and in too many cases desperate nature of many of today's attempts to build online communities." – Carl Zetie, Strategist, IBM

"Howard's theoretical stance is firmly grounded in a lifetime of practical experience which makes fascinating and sometimes very amusing reading. Have you ever wondered why some networks and communities thrive and others fail? Read this book and find out." –Dr. Jurek Kirakowski, Senior Lecturer, Human Factors Research Group, Cork, Ireland

"Professionals in technical communication will find this book packed with relevant information, especially given the evolving role of communicators in new media. Writers and editors can put best practices to use in working with their employers, with clients, or within their own professional lives."--Angel Belford, *Technical Communication*, Volume 58, Number 1, February 2011

"This important work fills a gap in the literature in its proposal of methods to fuse technology with practical community growth and sustainability... [Howard] more than knows the subject, considering the very prominent place he holds in the human computer interaction and usability communities... [Howard] very smoothly conveys his thoughts in an eloquent, easily accessible manner that any level of reader would be able to penetrate.... This surprisingly deep yet easily readable book seamlessly incorporates the research of people such as Bruce Tuckman, Leon Festinger, and Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff, among others... Highly recommended. All levels of academic and professional readers, especially those who create and maintain online communities."--CHOICE

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

With over 30 years of experience researching and effectively applying social networks, Tharon W. Howard is a nationally recognized leader in the field. He is a Professor at Clemson University where he teaches in the doctoral program in Rhetoric(s), Communication, and Information Design and the Master of Arts in Professional Communication program. As Director of the Clemson University Usability Testing Facility, he

has conducted sponsored research aimed at improving and creating new software interfaces, online document designs, and information architectures for clients including IBM, NCR Corp., AT&T, Time-Warner, etc. Howard is the author of *A Rhetoric of Electronic Communities*, co-author of *Visual Communication: A Writer's Guide*, co-editor of *Electronic Networks: Crossing Boundaries and Creating Communities*.

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