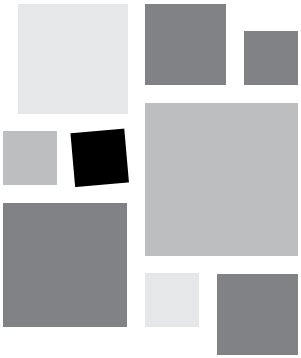

Designing Together

The collaboration and conflict management handbook for creative professionals

Dan M. Brown

New Riders VOICES THAT MATTER™

Foreword

The cliché of Forewords for books is they have a seemingly famous person express how wonderful the book you're about to read is. But the secret we authors don't want you to know is often the Foreword is written by a friend who either lost a bar bet or is trading for the destruction of unsavory photos in the author's possession. This explains why most Forewords are dreadfully dull and unworthy of the book they're in. I can promise you I've only met Dan once and owe him nothing.

I'm writing this Foreword simply because this book is exceptional. It captures the central flaw in the talents of most designers: how to create with other people. And it achieves this without falling victim to the clichés and platitudes that render most books of this kind useless.

Back when I was a student, my vision was a lifetime of making world-changing designs. But in these dreams I always had a starring role, with minions scurrying about, taking every order and doing all the work I didn't (or couldn't) do. How naive the dreams of young designers are. No great thing in the history of design and engineering was, or ever will be, made this way. It always takes a team of craftsmen, working in harmony, to make something great. Working with others has always been ignored in design culture. And the result is that the student fantasy lives on far too long in the careers of creatives, squandering their talent and their happiness, too.

If you pick any great design from today, or in history, and dig into the details of how it was made, you'll find a team of talented people working well together. Each contributing and building on each other's work. They didn't always like each other, but they learned how to put the quality of the results ahead of petty differences. Their ability to do this isn't magic. Nor is it based on their creative talents. Instead it's a set of simple attitudes and skills this book clearly explains. While I've learned many of these practices along my career, I'd never seen them as clearly named, explained, and taught as they are here.

If you want to escape work that buries you in stress, disrespect from coworkers, or meetings that resemble Custer's Last Stand, you'll find solutions in the following pages. I'm jealous of the moments of clarity awaiting you in the chapters ahead.

—Scott Berkun

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