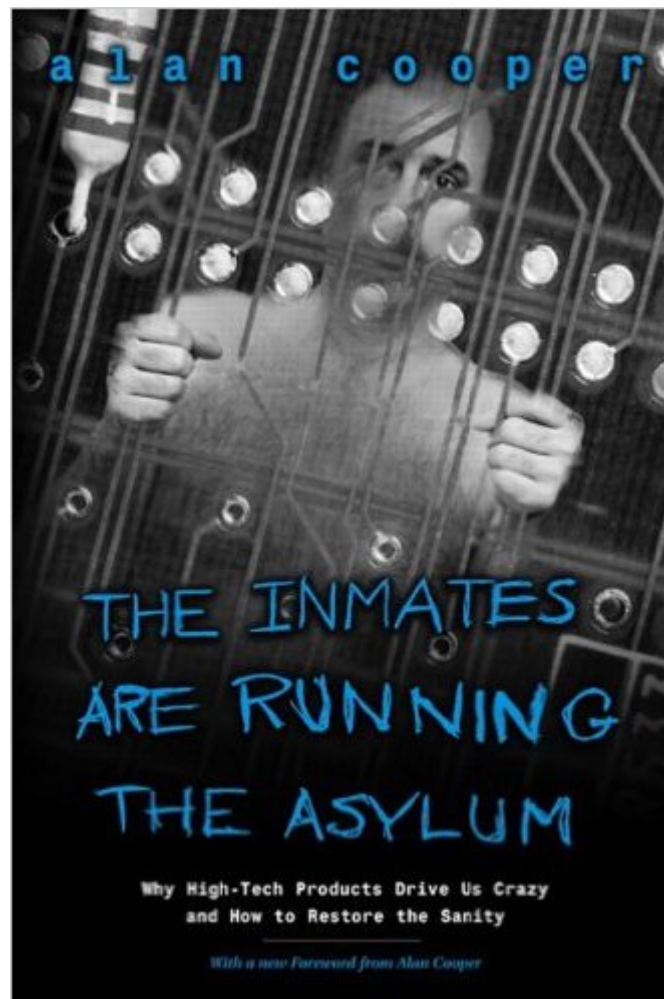# The Inmates Are Running The Asylum: Why High Tech Products Drive Us Crazy And How To Restore The Sanity (2nd Edition)

Synopsis

Imagine, at a terrifyingly aggressive rate, everything you regularly use is being equipped with computer technology. Think about your phone, cameras, cars-everything-being automated and programmed by people who in their rush to accept the many benefits of the silicon chip, have abdicated their responsibility to make these products easy to use. The Inmates Are Running the Asylum argues that the business executives who make the decisions to develop these products are not the ones in control of the technology used to create them. Insightful and entertaining, The Inmates Are Running the Asylum uses the author's experiences in corporate America to illustrate how talented people continuously design bad software-based products and why we need technology to work the way average people think. Somewhere out there is a happy medium that makes these types of products both user and bottom-line friendly; this book discusses why we need to quickly find that medium.

Book Information

File Size: 3562 KB

Print Length: 283 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Up to 5 simultaneous devices, per publisher limits

Publisher: Sams Publishing; 2 edition (February 24, 2004)

Publication Date: February 24, 2004

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B000OZ0N62

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #146,542 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store)   #30 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Computers & Technology > Systems Analysis & Design   #84 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Computer Science > Human-Computer Interaction   #85 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Graphics & Design > User Experience & Usability

Customer Reviews

The Inmates are Running the Asylum makes the business case for interaction designers playing a

central role in the development of technology products. It starts by providing examples of technology that is difficult, frustrating, humiliating, and even dangerous to use. Cooper argues that, although people have gotten used to being humiliated by technology, it doesn't have to be this way. His claim is that most technology, especially software, is designed by engineers who think differently than non-technical people: they enjoy being challenged by difficult problems and they are trained to think in terms of "edge cases" rather than on the common case. Thus when engineers design software, they tend to create products with far too many neat features that clutter the interface and make it difficult to do the simpler tasks. In the second part of the book, Cooper describes an approach that he and his design firm uses to simplify products and keep them focused on the users' needs, eliminating or hiding more complex features that few people use. He gives some specific and compelling examples of how they took a different approach to an interesting design problem and keep the product simple while still being powerful. He makes the case that you can grab a market with powerful, feature-rich, complex software that is frustrating to use, but you don't build customer loyalty that way; as soon as a well-designed version of that product comes along, your customers will defect. If you delight the user with your products, on the other hand, you will engender deep loyalty that will help see you through some poor business decisions. His primary example of this is the fanatical loyalty that Apple garners from its users, compared with the rage that Windows users feel toward Microsoft.

The culture of software development is changing, but grudgingly. The short-sighted notion "It's better to be first with something bad than second with something perfect" has been discredited after too long a reign as the New Paradigm of the Information Age ("It's brilliant because it's counter-intuitive!"), and instead has been exposed for what it is: bad business and a lousy way to treat customers. Alan Cooper's book helps make sense of things as software developers, after decades of coding for each other, are forced to begin acknowledging the cold and strange outside world of Real Life Users.Cooper's writing is generally clear and easy to follow. He documents his points well and uses numerous true-to-life examples to illustrate the concepts. The ATM analysis, for example, is both effective and memorabl: Why DOES the ATM list account types you don't have, permitting an invalid selection? Why can't you return to a previous screen to correct mistakes, instead of starting over from scratch? Why doesn't the system give you an error message that helps you understand the problem, rather than "Unable to complete transaction"? No one even bothers to ask these questions, Cooper points out, because we've accepted the default structure of ATM screens--which were created for the convenience of coders and system engineers, rather than

users.Cooper also performs a valuable service in demolishing that old standby programmers' excuse: "We don't call any of the shots-it's all management's fault!" Bull. Half the managers in the computer industry are former coders themselves (and laboring under an outmoded and faulty mental model of how software development must occur, by the way).

I have been passionately interested in usability issues and ways to improve them for a quarter century. I read all that I can on the subject to gain insight into how to make things better. This book, however, fails miserably.It is about 50% personal exorcism, projected onto others, of his own former self. It is about 50% advertisement for the kind of consultant he now stylizes himself as. It is 100% the kind of book on usability you would expect the "Father of Visual Basic" to produce.There is some good information in this book, which would normally merit a rating of two or three stars. However, by its polemical tone, it diverts attention away from really good books by such authors as Donald Norman and Jef Raskin, and, for that matter, Cooper's own _About Face_, which is quite good.If you hate unusable products and are looking for nice, easy scapegoats to be angry about, this will be an enjoyable read. If, however, you are interested in the actual reasons that products are poorly usable or are interested in how to improve the world, this book is worse than useless.One histrionic account describes how he cannot buy a VCR that lets him record shows by setting time with a knob. This would be excusable except for the fact that, the year this book was published, a remote control was being sold that did exactly that, and it recieved saturation advertising on television. The problem is that nobody bought it. Demand was so poor that it isn't made any more, and no sales staff I have spoken with has remembered anyone ever asking for such a device.

The Inmates Are Running the Asylum: Why High Tech Products Drive Us Crazy and How to Restore the Sanity (2nd Edition) The Inmates Are Running the Asylum The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat As Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of The Marquis de Sade (or Marat Sade) Asylum (The Asylum Trilogy Book 1) Sometimes I Drive My Mom Crazy, But I Know She's Crazy About Me: A Self-Esteem Book for Overactive and Impulsive Children RUN: What To Know About Running Before You Begin (A Complete Beginners Guide: Learn How To Start Running And Jogging): (Running And Jogging For Beginners, Weight Loss, Exercise, How to Run And Jog) Running Mindfully: How to Meditate While Running for Your Body, Mind and Soul (Tibetan Buddhism, Mindful Running) Running: Distance Running: Improve Your Long Distance Running Step By Step Increase Libido at Any Age Naturally: The Ultimate Guide to An Increased Sex Drive & Improved Sex Life for Men & Women (Increase

Sex Drive, Improve Sex Life) Running and Walking for Women Over 40 : The Road to Sanity and Vanity High Blood Pressure Cure: How To Lower Blood Pressure Naturally in 30 Days (Alternative Medicine, Natural Cures, Natural Remedies, High Blood Pressure ... Cures for High Blood Pressure, High Bl) Make: Like The Pioneers: A Day in the Life with Sustainable, Low-Tech/No-Tech Solutions Creative Snacks, Meals, Beverages and Desserts You Can Make Behind Bars:: A Cookbook for Inmates (and others on a tight budget) looking to put the fun back into food Stone Crazy (A Crazy Little Series) Anti Aging: The Best Anti Aging Beauty Products, Anti Aging Medicines and Anti Aging Skin Care Treatments to Make You Look and Feel Younger (Anti Aging, ... Secrets, Anti Aging Diet, Beauty Products) Don't Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me: A unique, professionally sourced guide to thousands of skin-care and makeup products from today's hottest ... and discover which products really work! Don't Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me: A unique guide to skin care and makeup products from today's hottest brands — shop smarter and find products that really work! Make Your Own Skin Care Products: How to Create a Range of Nourishing and Hydrating Skin Care Products Designing Products People Love: How Great Designers Create Successful Products Running: The Ultimate Guide To Running For Weight Loss, Health And Fitness - Includes Easy To Follow Training Plans For Beginners (How to Run, Jogging, Marathon Training)

[Dmca](#)