



Stanford eCorner

Design as an Iterative Process

David Kelley, *IDEO*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/686/Design-as-an-Iterative-Process>

Kelley believes that how quickly you create an initial prototype is directly proportional to how successful a product will be. Essentially, given a set project deadline, the earlier you invite feedback, the more chances you have to revise and improve. He calls this "enlightened trial and error."



Transcript

The last point I want to make is that it's an iterative process. This is a diagram by my mentor, Bob McKim, who started the product design program at Stanford. It's all about that it's just an iterative process. How quickly you get to the first crummy prototype and show it to people is directly proportional in my opinion to how successful the product will be. So you want to have a really iterative process. If you kind of have a linear process where you're going to spend X number of months doing the product, you should break that into a bunch of shorter segments because you don't find anything out until you start showing it to people. So you build the crummy prototype. It's like riding. Anne Lamott said this about the quickest she writes a crummy first draft, the better her novel will be. It's true for me.

When I'm writing something, if I just blast it out however bad it is, then it's just a kind of iterative process of correcting it or improving it. It's not like I'm staring at this blank piece of paper, what am I going to write? It's the same the way with product development. You build a crummy one and by the way, humans are really interesting, humans if you show them your idea in the prototype form, very people will tell you all the things they think are right with it but everybody will tell you all the things that are wrong with it. So you just write it down, you copiously take notes about all those things and you fix it. The next time you show up, you've got all those things fixed. It doesn't take very many times before you have a product that's delighting the people that you're making it for. So we call this enlightened trial and error.