Stanford eCorner

Make Bookkeeping Less Taxing

Scott Cook, *Intuit*

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Video URL: http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3596/Make-Bookkeeping-Less-Taxing

Scott Cook, co-founder of Intuit, explains how user testing has always been at the core of the business from the outset. As competitors differentiated themselves by offering more features, Scott says Intuit stayed focused on what customers cared about most: ease of use.
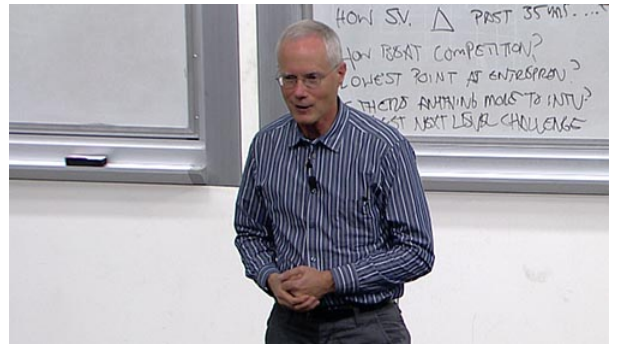
Transcript

We went and investigated with customers to find out what the real problem was. And then we stayed focused on it. If it's saving time, we're going to measure times time savings. We tested. We brought in-- I knew you couldn't trust our own opinions on what's easy even though we thought we had an easy design. So we brought in the people we could get for free during the day, trying to be the Palo Alto Junior League because we could get them for donuts and they hadn't used computers. We put them in front of a computer. We said here's this new software. You're going to pay these bills and we're going to watch. And we thought was so easy, so intuitive.

And then we'd watch them and they'd struggle. They'd get stuck. They'd go oh jeez. And then we'd go back and redesign those places where they struggled or got stuck. And then we'd bring in another group in a week or two and have them do the same thing and watch where they got stuck. And then we kept this iterative process of testing in quick cycles so that ease wasn't a theory-- it was a reality. We had tested and changed our design again and again. And we delivered the key benefit people wanted. The big thing they wanted was to less time and hassle doing this chore. And we relentlessly focused on that and ease and none of the competitors did.

They focus on features. And they had lots of them. They would do budgets and balance sheets and pretty graphs and investments. We focused on the stuff people did all the time and on the big-- and then the word of mouth took over. Our key salesperson has always been for our stuff, word of mouth. And that's because we did the product right by delivering the key benefit, that key improvement they want, and then make it so drop dead easy by testing, testing, testing. So that's what worked. As far as we know, we were the first people to do what's now called usability testing. It just hadn't been done up to that point. We didn't have a fancy name for it.

We just did it because it made sense.