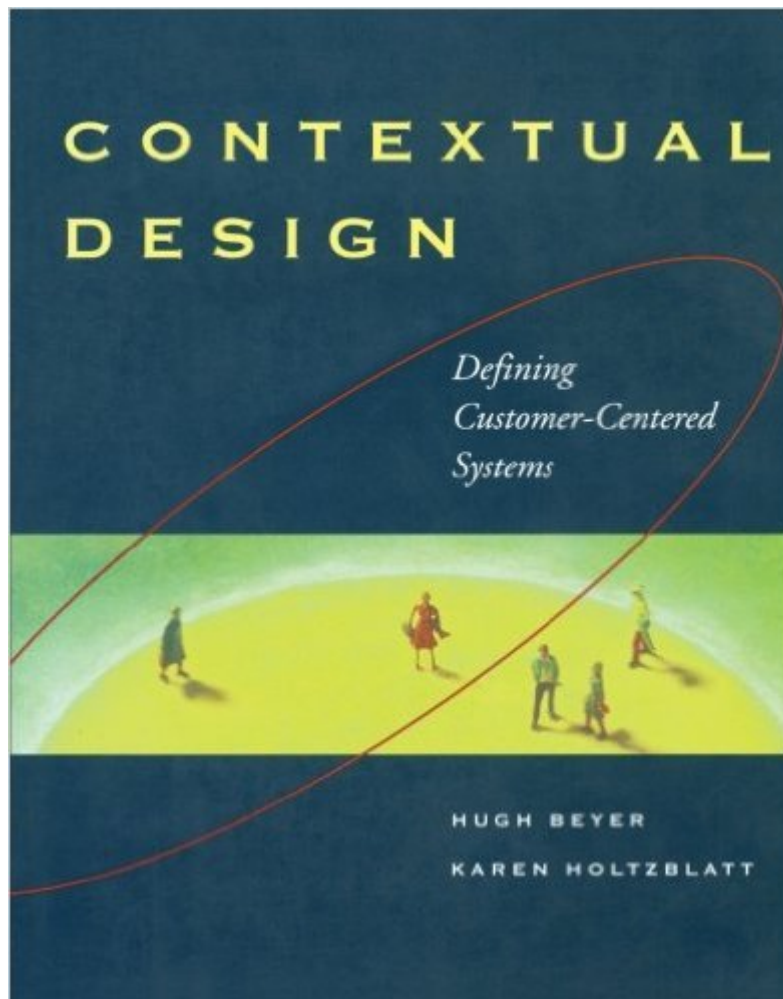


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# Contextual Design: Defining Customer-Centered Systems (Interactive Technologies)



## Synopsis

This book introduces a customer-centered approach to business by showing how data gathered from people while they work can drive the definition of a product or process while supporting the needs of teams and their organizations. This is a practical, hands-on guide for anyone trying to design systems that reflect the way customers want to do their work. The authors developed Contextual Design, the method discussed here, through their work with teams struggling to design products and internal systems. In this book, you'll find the underlying principles of the method and how to apply them to different problems, constraints, and organizational situations. Contextual Design enables you to + gather detailed data about how people work and use systems + develop a coherent picture of a whole customer population + generate systems designs from a knowledge of customer work + diagram a set of existing systems, showing their relationships, inconsistencies, redundancies, and omissions

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've been searching all over for good guides to the \*process\* of human-centered design as opposed to the techniques for good UI: This book is excellent on two counts<sup>1</sup>. The principles and methods you advocate<sup>2</sup>. The lack of competition, but this doesn't distract from the quality of the book. There are lots of books on how to do UI, but they all concentrate upon the widgets. This is the only one I have seen that really tells you how to go out and collect customer data, and then, what to do about

it. I also like the way it deals with UI design -- do it only after the analysis -- resist the temptation to start the design too soon.

I have to admit that it's taken me a long time to read this book. Every few pages, my brain filled with ideas as to how I could use the info in my organization! Make sure you finish reading a section before you try to apply it. The authors do a good job of starting at a higher level, then going into more detail in following chapters. You need this detail before you go on to the next section. This is not a theoretical book; the authors have been using these techniques for years to design real, complex products. It resonates well with my experiences in software user interface design. If you design products intended to be used by humans, you NEED this book. If everyone read this book and even \*tried\* to follow its principles, the products we buy and use would be vastly improved. Save the world; buy it today!

The book offers a fantastic guide to project teams for creating excellent software. If any group follows the design practices prescribed by Contextual Design, their users are likely to find the resulting software actually enhances their work practice, rather than gets in their way. The book works on the level of processes that project teams should follow to understand their users work and then to build the software to enhance that work practice. Someone wanting to focus on the level of GUI interface guidelines should look elsewhere. What is amazing to me so far as I read and use the book is how often these authors are saying something that is not only novel but also simply right. Great job by Holtzblatt and Beyer!-- Joe Grant

With all the talk about user-centered design, it's a relief to find a book that describes a well-defined and flexible approach to it. The authors have really done their homework. I especially appreciated the explanation of approaching site visits as if you were an apprentice. However, I really wish this book had been more concise. I kept wanting the authors to get to the point. Perhaps I'll appreciate this book's detail later, when I'm one day deep in the throes of a project that uses some or all of this approach. But today I merely wanted to become familiar with this approach and understand its benefits.

I have used this book both academically and professionally. The authors cover every facet of this important phase of the design process: they tell you why CI is important, explain every detail of doing it, and thoroughly detail ways to communicate findings to other people. Much better than most

of the Nielsen books on usability engineering (although much more narrow in scope) -- it's written in a nonacademic style and is fairly easy to peruse.

Beyer & Holtzblatt have done an excellent job describing the process of contextual design. I'm currently implementing a new company-wide business process, in conjunction with co-workers, and thought it would simply be a good idea to both refresh my memory, gather ideas, and form concepts that would be helpful in the organizational design process. This book has undoubtedly served the purposes I've wanted it to. Again, excellent book - worth the buy.

Contextual Design explains the customer's role in product design to high-tech product teams. It gives techniques and procedures on how to integrate customers (and potential customers) into the development cycle. The most important section for product managers is the chapter on techniques for interviewing (called "Contextual Inquiry" in the book's lexicon) details how to conduct an onsite interview, what to watch for, and which follow-up questions to ask. While geared to the systems analyst, the book is valuable to anyone responsible for gathering prospect problems at an onsite meeting.

The Kindle edition is laden with typos and editing errors. Looks like they converted an early draft rather than something that'd been copy-edited. The content is good; but it'd be nice if the obvious errors weren't so distracting.

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