



The Soul of Design: Harnessing the Power of Plot to Create Extraordinary Products

Robert Austin, Lee Devin

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What makes the Apple iPhone *cool*? Bang & Olufsen and Samsung's televisions *beautiful*? Any of a wide variety of products and services *special*? The answer is not simply functionality or technology, for competitors' products are often as good.

The Soul of Design explores the uncanny power of some products to grab and hold attention—to create desire. To understand what sets a product apart in this way, authors Lee Devin and Robert Austin push past personal taste and individual response to adopt a more conceptual approach. They carefully explore the hypothesis that there is something within a "special" product that makes it—well, special. They argue that this *je ne sais quoi* arises from "plot"—the shape that emerges as a product or service arouses and then fulfills expectations. Marketing a special product is, then, a matter of helping its audience perceive its plot and comprehend its qualities.

Devin and Austin provide keys to understanding why some products and services stand out in a crowd and how the companies that make them create these hits. Part One of the book introduces the authors' definition of plot in this context; Part Two breaks down the components needed to build a plot; Part Three describes what makes a plot coherent; Part Four takes on the challenges of making coherent products and services attractive to consumers. Part Four also presents detailed casework, which shows how innovators and makers have successfully brought special products to market.

Readers will come away with a sensible and clear approach to conceiving of artful products and services. This book will help managers and designers think about engaging with plot, taking aesthetic factors into account to provide consumers with more special things.

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