Avon J. Murphy, Editor

Books Reviewed in This Issue

color. These valuable short excerpts by outside experts are included throughout the text to provide other perspectives on particular elements of design, resulting in additional information as well as support for the book's main message.

A designer/author would be expected to have impeccable design within his own text, and to this end Reynolds is successful. The use of white space and the overall layout of the book illustrate the principles he explains. For example, each page has a wide margin of white space around the text. Occasionally, an entire page of white space is included with only a single quotation from a famous person that supports the main idea of that chapter. For example, the chapter about presenting data contains a quotation from the well-known physicist and science communicator Richard Feynman: "You can always recognize truth by its beauty and simplicity" (p. 144).

Reynolds weaves in several other specifics of Japanese culture to illustrate principles of Zen. He describes traditional Japanese umbrellas (*wagasa*), flower arrangement (*ikebana*), and alcoves for the display of art (*tokonoma*). Each element supports the overall idea of complexity expressed with simplicity, harmony, and balance.

No explanation is complete without real-life examples of effective presentation slides. Reynolds includes an entire chapter of examples. He annotates the slides to indicate their key design components, providing a quick reference.

The book concludes with purely motivational information about how to start a journey of improvement. Reynolds points to *hansei*, a self-introspection process in which progress is assessed and improvements proposed. It is the key to learning. We can also use the principle of *kaizen*, or continuous improvement, to take steps forward in implementing design principles. Reynolds also reiterates his original message about noticing everyday lessons surrounding us on a daily basis. By looking at billboards, packaged items, brochures, and signs along the street, we can learn design lessons each day. It is only necessary to pay attention and notice these everyday items.

Overall, Reynolds provides an excellent overview of design for the nondesigner. For the scientist, teacher, health care professional, and everyone in the business world, this book serves as a guide to the most essential elements of design. From the use of space and color

to the placement of objects and the overall appeal and harmony of design, there is something in this book for everyone.

Julie Kinyoun

Julie Kinyoun is a freelance writer who also teaches introductory chemistry and physical science courses at community colleges in southern California.

Own the Room: Business Presentations That Persuade, Engage & Get Results

David Booth, Deborah Shames, and Peter Desberg. 2010. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. [ISBN 978-0-07-162859-4. 272 pages, including index. US$18.95 (softcover).]
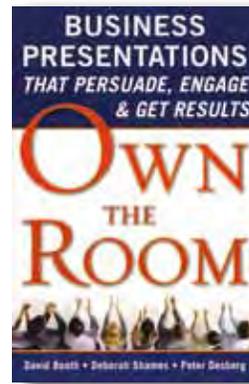
We have all heard the adage "show, don't tell." That is the basic premise of *Own the Room*. Instead of repeating the stodgy, conservative style of business presentations full of bland facts and figures, the authors recommend enlivening your presentations with stories and surprise. The authors are an actor, a director, and a psychologist, all of whom bring their expertise to their modern presentation style.

The book reads as if the authors were giving a presentation, switching speakers in each chapter. Although unclear at first, this method lets them deliver personal and entertaining anecdotes. To explain your movements during a presentation, says Booth the director, for example, "if I want to shake the actors out of complacency or flat line readings, I change the blocking" (p. 169).

Own the Room offers a lot of useful information and entertaining stories, including pointers for making each stage of your presentation more interesting: Grab your audience's attention at the start, use appropriate anecdotes to maintain surprise and intrigue, and drive your point home at the end. The authors include many specific examples of speeches using both their method and the conservative style so you can compare and contrast. They also make many interesting similes,

such as how picking a team to give a presentation is like constructing a string quartet: "As in music, we are attracted to counterpoint" (p. 151).

Although most of the book can help you gain confidence, the authors devote a chapter to overcoming stage fright. Part of overcoming stage fright is being well prepared. After explaining the four stages of stage fright, they suggest cures such as breathing exercises for managing your anxiety and "changing your behavior, which is directly under your control" (p. 133).

One improvement would be a recap at the end of each chapter. For example, it would be useful to have lists of the roles a presenter can take, with related page numbers. Although the headings are easy enough to find, quick reference lists would make navigation easier.

All in all, I find the suggestions workable. For example, anecdotes are better for explaining "why" because we "tend to believe anecdotal evidence over facts and figures" (p. 52). And surprise engages your audience because (as Steven Johnson says) "researchers now believe that there is an entire neurochemical system in the brain devoted to the pursuit and recognition of new experiences" (p. 48). I plan to apply the authors' approach to creating more engaging tutorials and e-learning.

Angela Boyle
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The Extreme Searcher's Internet Handbook: A Guide for the Serious Searcher
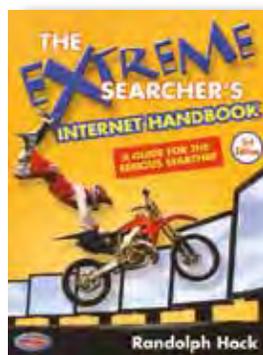
At first glance, *The Extreme Searcher's Internet Handbook: A Guide for the Serious Searcher* may appear to be a guide to better use of Internet search engines. And that is one of the topics covered by author Randolph Hock. But he goes beyond search engines to provide a whole spectrum of online resources for finding data, photos, audio and video, opinions, products, news, people, and more that all have the potential for becoming essential items on what he calls your "internet reference shelf" (p. xxiv).

Hock has worked as a university librarian, and he approaches this book like a reference librarian who wants to share what he has learned about finding information online. His stated goal is to provide "a guide for researchers, students, writers, librarians, teachers, and others, covering what serious users need to know to take full advantage of internet tools and resources" (p. xxi). As might be expected, Hock spends a good portion of the book on the ins and outs of the major search engines (Google, Yahoo!, Bing, and Ask). Search parameters and features of each are compared, and screen shots aid in his explanations of what the results offer. If you regularly use these search engines, there may not be much new for you here, although I did pick up a few tips that should help me refine my future results.

What I find most useful about *The Extreme Searcher's Internet Handbook* are the resources other than the search engines. Hock introduces you to a whole realm of directories, portals, forums, aggregation sites, locators, one-stop reference Web sites, and other tools that may or may not be accessed by search engines for various reasons. Not only is it useful to have a computer handy when reading this book, but be prepared to be sidetracked by Web sites and other resources you didn't know existed. While the target audience for the book is the general computer user and not necessarily technical communicators, there are many resources, such as