



A simple **conversation.**

In this world of smartphones, tablets, and wearables, people are mesmerized by what technology can do. What makes using today's devices so delightful and easy is a focus on the effects design has on the entire user experience. Profound Technologies Creative Director Corey Geiser says the company's success comes from a passionate need for clean design that sets Profound apart in the industry.

Corey's approach to design is to transform technology that could be intimidating into a device that is much more user friendly: "My job is to take something unfamiliar and turn it into the users best friend. You could have the most sophisticated system ever made sitting right in front of you but if it is too confusing and off-putting to interact with, no one is going to want to use it."

Corey sees that "people have a profound need for simplicity." This is where design comes in. "Design is a way to bring a coherent order to those modern complications and to do so across the system to achieve a user experience that becomes second nature. We want them to find the interface so easy to use that they end up taking for granted how intricate their system actually is."

User interfaces were not always as streamlined as they are becoming. Corey has seen a lot of changes in the field since the early 2000's when touch panels were solely for function and design was an afterthought. "When Apple released the iPhone, the bar was set high. Companies that didn't prioritize design were seen as out of touch. Apple's approach was more skeuomorphic graphics which basically

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means that they had designs that resemble noticeable objects. It was a great way for consumers to get comfortable with these new tools." Since the iPhone's launch, trends have changed. "Skeuomorphic design is kind of dated now.

People are more educated on these devices, so we don't really need to hold their hands as much. Today design is much more leaned down. Now we try to make everything cleaner by flattening graphics and giving them depth with touches of the familiar that their eye will recognize and appreciate."

Because customers' tastes have become much more sophisticated, they now care about the appearance of the user interface more than ever. For Corey "the first step in developing the user experience is to develop a user interface which, not only meets challenges, but challenges the customers back."

This contrasts the experience Corey had with a customer who was still contently stuck in the old ways of graphic design: "He kept referring to the early 2000's way of doing things as cutting-edge. I challenged him with examples of what we are doing at Profound and what is happening within the industry. In his mind it finally clicked that taking designs and throwing out everything but the necessary was the best way to do it. He got to see how experiences have evolved and loved



discovering something new."

When it comes to the structure of the interface, Profound takes the approach of 'out of sight, out of mind'. "This is where focal control comes in," says Corey. "Think of a Russian nesting doll. There are different layers to the experience. We begin with something broad and at each level we toss aside what is no longer important so the users have only what is needed right in front of them, from main menu to sub menus and so on. The goal is to reduce the distraction but to never leave the user more than two or three button presses away from their final destination while giving them a tether to get back home."

So how does Profound make their interfaces so easy to use? "We have to think about what the user's needs are and how we can meet those needs in the most intuitive way possible. There is so much you can throw into a touchpanel, but the role of a designer is to be a translator between developer and customer. The full range of controls needs to turn into an easy to follow flow, which is why we use focal control." Some might say this is 'dumbing down' the system for customers, but Corey strongly disagrees: "I think such a concept is incredibly insulting. People are not naturally inclined to use these new cutting-edge tools. So if the customer can't understand the product, that is on the producer. Not the customer. It is about taking machines and making them work for people. Not the other way around."

Not only does design make things easier, but Corey's aim for his designs are to compliment the space it is in. "We can't control how the manufacturers choose to design their hardware, nor can we control what room these devices will be in. What we can do is take our streamlined approach and wrap it in an aesthetic that does not stick out like a sore thumb in any room, but looks as if it belongs within that environment. This will become critical across the technology industry as more of these devices become as much a part of our living and working spaces as a sofa or a desk is today."

In the technology industry, it is easy to look in awe at the amazing things other companies created, but there is no point dwelling on what others have made. "If I see some design more and more then I want to avoid it. Someone else already created it, so where's the excitement in that? The thrill comes from trying to make something that others wished they had created," Corey explains. "That's what I love about the tech industry. It gives us permission to always be thinking about what better thing is next."

Corey is fascinated by the prospect of what is yet to come and loves how it can be used to connect with and serve everyday people. The more reactive technology gets, the easier it is to interact with our surroundings.

Corey describes the power of these new systems and designs: "Arthur C. Clarke says that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.' Interface design needs to be held to this standard. Smart systems need to be extensions of ourselves, working so well that it becomes almost miraculous. It should leave a person wondering how they ever lived without this technology. This is the mission of Profound Technologies."