
What goes into designing intuitive intercoms?

Technologic devices have become an essential part in our everyday lives. Keeping track of how every device functions can quickly become a cumbersome and demanding task. It is therefore more important than ever for companies to design products that are easy to understand and use.

Within a technology-driven company, designing easy-to-use and intuitive products might not be the main objective. But the aspect of how a product interacts with its user can often be the difference between a successful and failed product.

Interaction design is the design of the interaction between people, and systems or products. In our thesis, we wanted to investigate how an intercom would be designed if the main focus was put on the designing an easy-to-use product.

Products such as intercoms need to be accommodating to all kinds of people, from almost every age and culture. This means that every aspect of how the product is supposed to be used has to be considered carefully to make it as intuitive as possible. For instance, buttons should be big enough and give sufficient feedback when a press is recorded, how to operate the device should be clear, and symbols should be interpreted correctly.



The final prototype of our intercom.

To design a product that achieves all of these criteria is a complex task, and it is easy to make a confusing product with too many buttons and functions.

In the development of this intercom, we used a human-centred design methodology that emphasises on building early models, testing them with people, and using that information to improve the product in several steps.

The resulting product is an intercom using a big numeric keypad with back-lit buttons. It also includes a call and cancel button. To use the intercom you can either use an access card or the call functionality to get in to a building. While no direct comparison is made between the ease-of-use of these prototypes and similar competitive products, the final testing showed that users experienced very few problems when handling this prototype.

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