

THE JACK PRINCIPLES

of Interactive Show Interface & Design

The following principles are guidelines for creating interactive programs that share the very qualities that make TV so engaging for a mass audience. The Jack Principles define the essence of what we do—what we call “Jellyvision Shows”—and outline the guidelines for designing such programs. It is our hope that The Jack Principles will serve not only as a practical tool for developers, but will also help illuminate a clear vision for interactive programming for a mass audience.

DEFINITION

interactive show (n1túr-^k2t v shÅ) Am. Eng. *n.* An experience delivered through a screen where sound and picture are synchronized, pacing is constant, and the program responds to the individual input of each user primarily through words.

..... Pacing-

Interactive shows can achieve a sense of pacing through most of the same techniques that television uses. Interactive shows, however, have the additional challenge of drawing the user into the pacing of the program. This can be accomplished through use of the following principles:

1. Give the user only one task to accomplish at a time.
2. Limit the number of choices the user has at any one time.
3. Give the user only meaningful choices.
4. Make sure the user knows what to do at every moment.
5. Focus the user's attention on the task at hand.
6. Use the most efficient manner of user input.
7. Make the user aware that the program is waiting.
8. Make the user feel guilty about making the program wait and not calling home enough.
9. Pause, quit or move on without the user's response if it doesn't come fast enough.

Remember: Less is more: Give the user fewer choices. Give them less control. Keep the graphics sparse. Do one thing at a time. Never freeze mayonnaise.

..... Creating the Illusion of Awareness-

The distinguishing power of an interactive television program is its ability to create the illusion that characters within the program are actually aware of the user sitting in front of the screen. The characters in the program respond to the user the way a human being might respond. This illusion can be created by utilizing any or all of the following principles:

.....Specifically Respond with Human Intelligence and Emotion To:

1. the user
2. the user's actions



3. the user's inactions
4. the user's past actions
5. the user's past girlfriends
6. a series of the user's actions
7. the actual time and space that the user is in
8. the comparison of different users' situations and actions

Remember: Much of the art of interactive television programming is creating the illusion of awareness without drawing attention to it. The star of the show is not on the screen; the star of the show is sitting in front of it, probably picking his or her nose.

..... Maintaining the Illusion of Awareness

As an interactive television program creates the illusion of human awareness, it must maintain that illusion by adhering to the following principles:

1. Use text and dialogue that generate a sense of intimacy.
2. Make sure characters act appropriately while the user is interacting.
3. Make sure dialogue never seems to repeat.
4. Be aware of the number of simultaneous users.
5. Be aware of the gender of the users.
6. Make sure the performance of dialogue is seamless.
7. Avoid the presence of characters when user input cannot be evaluated.

Remember: Never let the user smell the underlying technology. Always ensure the technology has showered and applied a powerful antiperspirant.

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