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# Managing The Design Factory



## Synopsis

The man who launched a revolution in product development with his bestselling *Developing Products in Half the Time* is back with a new book that's also certain to be a classic. In *Managing the Design Factory* Donald G. Reinertsen presents concepts and practical tools that will be invaluable for anyone trying to get products out of the pipeline and into the market. The first book to put the principles of *World Class Manufacturing* to work in the development process, *Managing the Design Factory* combines the powerful analytical tools of queuing, information, and system theories with the proven ideas of organization design and risk management. The result: a methodical approach to consistently hit the "sweet spot" of quality, cost, and time in developing any product. Reinertsen illustrates these concepts with concrete examples drawn from his work with many leading companies across different industries. Fresh and thought-provoking, the book challenges many of the conventional approaches to product development. "There are no best practices," Reinertsen writes, "the idea of best practices is a seductive but dangerous trap." Unlike other books that promote rules and rituals based on benchmarking "best practices," this book focuses on practical tools that account for varied situations. He breaks new ground with a disciplined, quantitative approach for making decisions on critical issues: When should we use a sequential or concurrent process? Centralized or decentralized control? Functional or team organizations? Full of practical techniques, concrete examples, and solid general principles, this is a real toolkit for product developers. Moreover, it is written with the clarity, precision, and humor that are Reinertsen's trademarks. He promises to challenge the thinking of anyone involved in product development.

## Book Information

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I have never seen so much good advice about product development in one place. Applying concepts from manufacturing, finance, queuing theory and communications theory, Reinertsen proposes many ways in which we can design better processes for development. For example, if we were to view the investment in design work as a depreciating asset, like work-in-process inventory in the factory, we would be able to make better decisions about time, manpower, and project delay tradeoffs. Key concepts include: valuing design work based on its financial impact on the organization; learning as much as possible as early as possible in the development cycle; managing queues in the development process; creating specifications which are flexible for as long as possible, so that evolving customer requirements can be accommodated. He clearly shows that we can optimize development work on only one of the following parameters: Product cost, product performance, speed of development, development expense. The approach for each one is different, and it is important to be clear which one is primary. There is a wealth of useful and practical advice in this book. For example, here are some comments on testing: "Too often testing is viewed as a necessary evil in the development process. It only exists because we make mistakes. If we made fewer mistakes, we would not need to do all this testing. We should spend our money on 'designing in quality' instead of finding defects by testing. The result of such an attitude may be a test department that is under-resourced and under-managed. Unfortunately, by viewing testing as a problem, rather than an asset, we miss the opportunity to capitalize on the extraordinary improvements that can take place in product testing.

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