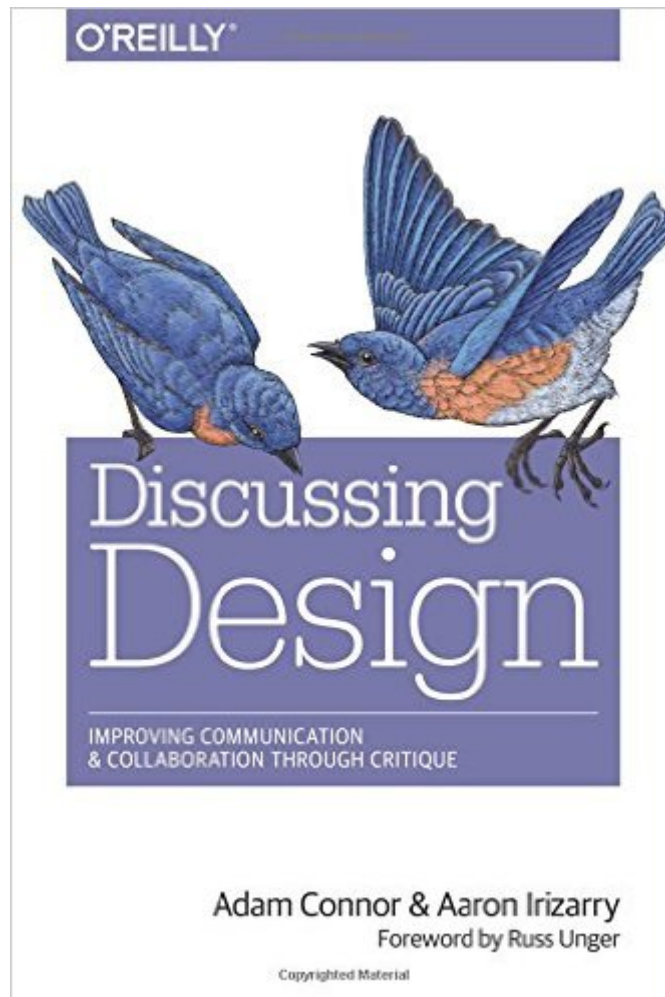


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# Discussing Design: Improving Communication And Collaboration Through Critique



## Synopsis

Real critique has become a lost skill among collaborative teams today. Critique is intended to help teams strengthen their designs, products, and services, rather than be used to assert authority or push agendas under the guise of "feedback." In this practical guide, authors Adam Connor and Aaron Irizarry teach you techniques, tools, and a framework for helping members of your design team give and receive critique. Using firsthand stories and lessons from prominent figures in the design community, this book examines the good, the bad, and the ugly of feedback. You'll come away with tips, actionable insights, activities, and a cheat sheet for practicing critique as a part of your collaborative process. This book covers:

- Best practices (and anti-patterns) for giving and receiving critique
- Cultural aspects that influence your ability to critique constructively
- When, how much, and how often to use critique in the creative process
- Facilitation techniques for making critiques timely and more effective
- Strategies for dealing with difficult people and challenging situations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When I started reading "Discussing Design: Improving Communication & Collaboration Through Critique," I wasn't sure this book was necessary. It seemed to be merely a compilation of group communication principles (plus some user experience design techniques) covered in many other resources. By the time I finished reading, I'd changed my mind. This tutorial on communication and collaboration methods does contain some familiar concepts. However, it's tailored to meet the

distinctive needs of designers (and those who work with designers) in environments where "getting feedback" is a common workplace expectation (or a desired outcome), but acquiring meaningful, useful information that truly enhances and advances a project can be difficult to accomplish. In the opening pages of their book, authors Adam Connor and Aaron Irizarry define "critique" as "analysis that helps us understand what is working and what isn't [in products or ideas for products] and whether we are on the right track toward reaching our goals." They explain that good critique is related to specific aspects of a product or a decision, is aligned with project objectives or best practices, and is a way to examine how and why the objectives are or aren't being supported in the most current version of the product. They contrast useful critique with feedback that is simply a quick gut reaction, or a way that people reveal their own (often biased) vision for the product or idea being discussed. They confront directly the art/design school stereotype of critique, in which work by a novice is figuratively (or possibly literally) "ripped apart" by a senior designer.

If you've ever shown your work to others and felt bad or even got defensive afterwards, and want to know why, this book is for you. It uncovers the broader aspect of critique so you can always use it to your advantage - to inform your design decisions. Critique is feedback that is specific, pertinent to the project's objectives and useful in explaining the how's and why's. It facilitates understanding and improvement of a design, not judgement. The authors differentiate critique from reactive feedback (person's initial, unfiltered reaction) and directive feedback (personal opinion of what should be changed). Instead, it is meant to be a slow and deliberate activity that requires critical thinking. The first step of practicing good critique is to build a common foundation with your team. Using personas, scenario and collaborative activities, we make sure that everyone on the team has a clear understanding of what the project is about. After that, set goals and objectives to move the discussion in the right direction. A framework of questions can help develop relevant and effective feedback:- Where are you in your process?- What can I help you with the most?- What is the objective of the design?- What elements of the design are related to the objectives?- Are those elements effective in achieving the objectives?- Why or why not? Finally, here are ten bad habits that hinder proper critique: Reacting, being selfish, getting defensive, starting from disparate foundations, lacking focus; focusing on what isn't working, lack of discussion (and why), avoiding participation, problem solving (generative thinking) and confusing critiques with reviews.

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