



**FAST COMPANY**

## Feedback

Letters. Updates. Advice.

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## Designing Readers

I enjoyed reading your annual Masters of Design issue (October) and about the innovative products and creative designers you highlighted. It was a thorough accounting of the current state of the Design Economy, with one glaring oversight. You omitted one of the fastest-growing areas in the design space, namely how companies are applying product-design thinking and methodology to innovative service-design processes.

An innovative product can be relatively easy to duplicate and creates a fleeting advantage. The design of an exceptional service environment is much more difficult to replicate and far more lasting. When Westin Hotels & Resorts shocked the industry with--perish the thought--a bed that was supercomfortable, it delighted bleary-eyed travelers around the globe. But before long, competitors at all price points knocked off their versions of Westin's Heavenly Bed. You can now enjoy a good night's sleep (complete with the appropriate pillow selection, thread count, and duvet cover) at most midscale hotels. Westin, however, anticipated this development and made sure that as a brand it was equally adept at service and product design. It created a model and experience for service that ensured its guests will return because of its staff's friendliness, efficiency, resourcefulness, responsiveness, and knowledge. Ultimately, the product becomes the expected cost of entry. But well-designed service creates the intimacy and emotional bond that drive loyalty and growth.

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