Chapter 15

Everyday inclusive design

Nina Warburton
Alloy Total Product Design
Designing inclusively presents some unique challenges to product designers working within the highly competitive consultancy environment. This chapter will discuss some of the practical experiences that Alloy has had as a product design consultancy pursuing an inclusive design agenda, reflecting on what this has taught us about carrying out inclusive design—everyday. The chapter will discuss aspects of the inclusive design experience, investigate why we should design inclusively, what issues are facing inclusive designers, and ultimately take a look at how we might integrate users into the design process. Illustrating these points are two case studies, one commercial, one speculative. The Freestyle 60 for BT Communications Products will show how we employed inclusive design principles in the design of a mass consumer product. Kettlesense, a non-commercial project carried out in response to the 2001 DBA Design Challenge, will illustrate a more idealistic approach.

There are a number of questions that arise when considering the role of inclusive design within the product design consultancy environment. Practical experience of running inclusive design projects from both a commercial and non-commercial perspective can help to provide some answers to these questions from a design consultancy perspective. Gleaned as a result of our collective experience as a design consultancy, these insights may be of value to those considering implementing an inclusive design policy, or serve as a benchmark against which other experiences can be compared.

Some of the key questions are:

- What does inclusive design mean to product designers?
- What effect does thinking inclusively have to both our design experience and to the solutions and artefacts that result?
- Why should we design inclusively?
- What are the key issues facing the inclusive designer and how can we best integrate users into the design process?

Inclusive design has been specified as “...a process whereby designers and manufacturers ensure that their products and services address the needs of the widest possible audience” (DTI Foresight, 2000).

It is clear that inclusive design needs to draw back from the American defined term of universal design, with its connotations of all encompassing consideration. But more importantly, it must move on