

Positive Computing: Technology for Wellbeing and Human Potential (MIT Press)

By Rafael A. Calvo, Dorian Peters

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On the eve of Google's IPO in 2004, Larry Page and Sergey Brin vowed not to be evil. Today, a growing number of technologists would go further, trying to ensure that their work actively improves people's lives. Technology, so pervasive and ubiquitous, has the capacity to increase stress and suffering; but it also has the less-heralded potential to improve the well-being of individuals, society, and the planet. In this book, Rafael Calvo and Dorian Peters investigate what they term "positive computing" -- the design and development of technology to support psychological well-being and human potential.

Calvo and Peters explain that technologists' growing interest in social good is part of a larger public concern about how our digital experience affects our emotions and our quality of life -- which itself reflects an emerging focus on humanistic values in many different disciplines. Synthesizing theory, knowledge, and empirical methodologies from a variety of fields, they offer a rigorous and coherent foundational framework for positive computing. Sidebars by experts from psychology, neuroscience, human--computer interaction, and other disciplines supply essential context. Calvo and Peters examine specific well-being factors, including positive emotions, self-awareness, mindfulness, empathy, and compassion, and explore how technology can support these factors. Finally, they offer suggestions for future research and funding.

SidebarsTimothy N. Bickmore, Jeremy Bailenson, danah boyd, Jane Burns, David R. Caruso, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Felicia Huppert, Mary-Helen Immordino-Yang, Adele Krusche and J. Mark G. Williams, Jane McGonigal, Jonathan Nicholas, Don Norman, Yvonne Rogers

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Editorial Review

Review

- "Positive Computing: The Tech Buzzword You Need to Know for 2015" - **Washington Post**
- "Positive Computing': The Next Big Thing in Human-centered Design?" - **Forbes**

Positive Computing lays a solid theoretical foundation for designers of the next generation of user interfaces who will shape positive user experiences. It goes deeply into familiar territory of motivation, engagement, and flow, then all the way to mindfulness, empathy, and compassion.

(Ben Shneiderman, Distinguished University Professor, Department of Computer Science, University of Maryland, College Park)

Positive Computing by Rafael Calvo and Dorian Peters is a deep exploration of the theory, psychology, analysis, and passion around using computing to make a positive influence on the world. Every graduate student studying this new, multidisciplinary field should have a copy at his or her fingertips. Calvo and Peters leave no stone unturned in discussing the many facets around positive computing, and have sought out the broadest set of references. The book was written in an engaging and practical manner and was a pleasure to read. I know I will go back to my copy again and again for useful insights.

(Mary Czerwinski, Research Manager of the Visualization and Interaction (VIBE) Research Group, Microsoft Research)

Few people think of technology as uplifting, delightful, and enjoyable. Sure, our stuff works, but far too often at the cost of increased anxiety, frustration, and a feeling of disempowerment. In *Positive Computing*, Calvo and Peters show how research in the psychological principles of enjoyment, engagement, and empowerment can be used to design technology that enhances our lives, creates more engagement and pleasure, and makes positive contributions to our emotional lives. Three cheers to Calvo and Peters for *Positive Computing*: It's about time.

(Don Norman, Director of the Design at UC San Diego Program; author of *Emotional Design* and *The Design of Everyday Things*)

This book is an important contribution, providing excellent background on a complex emerging area that promises to be very significant from both a societal and scientific perspective.

(Steve Whittaker, Professor of Human Computer Interaction, UC Santa Cruz)

It's a call to action that Calvo and Peters are delivering to a wider audience, not just the innovators working

under the shadows of Hangar One. And they are delivering it at a time when technologists have a big opportunity to rethink their approach to design. A new era of computing -- wearable, integrated, ubiquitous -- is fast approaching. Will it be good or bad for our wellness? If you believe in human agency, then the call to action is real. There's no time like today to plan for a future in which we can thrive, and not be the victims of our own design.

(Giovanni Rodriguez *Forbes*)

About the Author

Rafael A. Calvo is Associate Professor of Software Engineering and Director of the Positive Computing Lab at the University of Sydney. Dorian Peters is user experience designer and online strategist for the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney and Creative Leader of the Positive Computing Lab there.

Users Review

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Clarence Delapaz:

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