

Car Dashboard Design

Robert L Gallick

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An article in ZDNet suggested that Apple Inc. could dominate car technology. They state that car companies are not very good at human interfaces. That is an understatement. The general goal would not be to plug the iPhone® into anything. A car could sync media, maps, contacts for audio calling and time with the owner's iPhone, or even more generically with the user's iTunes over a Wi-Fi or cellular network. Vehicles could be designed to be iTunes friendly. There is a lot more to a dashboard than a media interface. I'm not so sure how well an iPhone touch screen would work when it is 20 below and the user has gloves on.

There is a lot of opportunity for car companies to make vehicles more user-friendly. I still get confused if I have my windshield wipers set to on, set to mist, set to off or if the rear wiper is on. A simple visual icon on the dashboard would help a lot. Also, the clock on my Honda Element does not seem to be able to keep time. And, trying to figure out which buttons to press to even set the clock is a challenge without pulling the user manual out of the glove compartment. It would be much simpler if the clock would sync with my cell phone each time I got in the car – or sync with my home computer via a Wi-Fi link. Such simple things, yet the human interface designers for the car companies seem to be clueless.

The ZDNet author suggests that Apple should create car products and that they would dominate the market. But Apple is not perfect either. I complain about my Honda not being able to keep correct time – but my Apple iPad does not even sync its time with my computer. The industry has a long way to go to improve human interfaces and improve the usability of products.

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