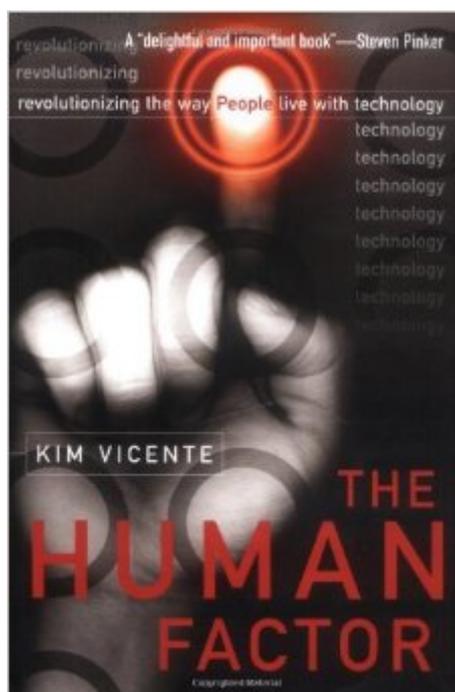


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# The Human Factor: Revolutionizing The Way People Live With Technology



## Synopsis

In this incessantly readable, groundbreaking work, Vicente makes vividly clear how we can bridge the widening gap between people and technology. He investigates every level of human activity - from simple matters such as our hand-eye coordination to complex human systems such as government regulatory agencies, and why businesses would benefit from making consumer goods easier to use. He shows us why we all have a vital stake in reforming the aviation industry, the health industry, and the way we live day-to-day with technology.

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## Customer Reviews

This was one of those books that is totally effortless to read. I attribute this to Kim Vicente's obvious passion for what he does, and his interesting ideas, research, and teaching, but most of all to his extraordinary ability to express himself. I've read many similar books, like Normal Accidents, Human Error, and most of Donald A. Norman's books, and enjoyed them all, but this one was probably the

most enjoyable. It's very logical and well-designed, and does a great job of clearly explaining past disasters like Chernobyl and TMI. I was especially enthralled, as well as appalled, by the description of the Walkerton Ontario public water disaster as an example of a system failure. This was the first I heard of that one. His recommendations and predictions for the way forward are eminently sensible and practical. I especially liked the possibility of instituting anonymous incident reporting systems like the Aviation Safety Reporting System in medicine and industry. But most of all I'm very glad that such an excellent thinker, author, and teacher is following up and developing the groundbreaking and critically important work of Jens Rasmussen.

With an open, friendly style, Vicente manages to explore the use - and misuse - of technology all around us, from our day-to-day life to critical systems like health care and nuclear plants. Vicente has a gift for weaving a web and linking elements from seemingly unrelated fields and linking them together in a thoroughly convincing manner. As he himself advocates here, the author has not written this book to assign blame for the current "bad fit" between technology-for-its-own-sake and people, but instead focuses on laying a groundwork towards a more balanced, manageable and safe design and application of technology. This fascinating, engaging book is a must-read for anyone whose car has grown too complicated, whose VCR keeps blinking 12:00, or who feels that technology has got out of hand. It's probably not the best book for someone about to undergo a stay in hospital...

Ever since Charlie Chaplin parodied automation in *Modern Times*, we have known what happens when we ignore the human factor in technology, but we continue to produce dangerous and unusable devices. Dr Vicente, a professor of human factors engineering, claims that we need to define technology in much broader terms than we usually do in order to avoid a "Cyclopean fixation on either mechanistic or humanistic world views." We need, in fact, to consider the entire legal, psychological, organizational and political environment in which technology is embedded. The author calls this approach Human-tech. Consider that one of the reasons that hospitals continue to kill patients, even after badly designed equipment is identified, is that medical personnel dare not openly admit error, because of the severe career and legal consequences. This type of problem goes beyond traditional technical design issues of usability or ergonomics. Ultimately, Dr Vicente is optimistic that we can and will resolve these problems. He offers the commercial airline industry as an example. In 2001, despite the horrendous murders on September 11th, the total number of major airline crashes was fewer than in any year since World War II. What the aviation industry did for

commercial flights, we can do for our healthcare system, airport security, or anything we want to turn our hand to.

Kim Vicente has probably been the most qualified successor of Jens Rasmussen. The criticism against present I.T. state is strongly based but Vicente does not stop there: He suggests practical and realistic ways to advance.

Was a required book for a master's course I took. It is engaging only if you are trying to understand Human factors and the way they impact the life of a human. Not necessarily for the casual read. Very good examples and a lot of opinions.

Dr. Vicente presents the interaction of technology and people in a clear, concise, and easy to read way. As a manager and engineer in the manufacturing world, The Human Factor gave me ample case studies of complex issues (some of which, like 3-Mile Island, are explored in other texts I have read as well) in context with practical issues in either everyday life or with specific application. How we interact with our stove burners or make sure a Ziploc bag is closed both were used to explore the human approach to technology and how to improve it. The Human Factor was recommended to me by our corporate safety officer and I think that is probably the real value of this text. It is perfect for safety and human factors professionals to either recommend or use in a book study with those who are involved but are not dedicated to reading original research in the area. For the majority of people, technical, leaders, or both, who need to deal with the human interaction with technology, this is a great book.

Within the HF world, this is a highly regarded book. It is an excellent read and very insightful.

This book describes all the frustrations I've ever had with technology that is supposed to improve my work and my life. Vicente examines the problem not only with an engineer's understanding of design but also with a sharp eye on human nature. From photocopiers to nuclear power plants, he presents an intelligent, engaging and entertaining argument for changing our view of the world. However, unlike most general books in this area, he does more than raise questions-he offers a way forward, a framework for making humans the centre of design-a revolutionary concept! This is a book everyone should read.

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