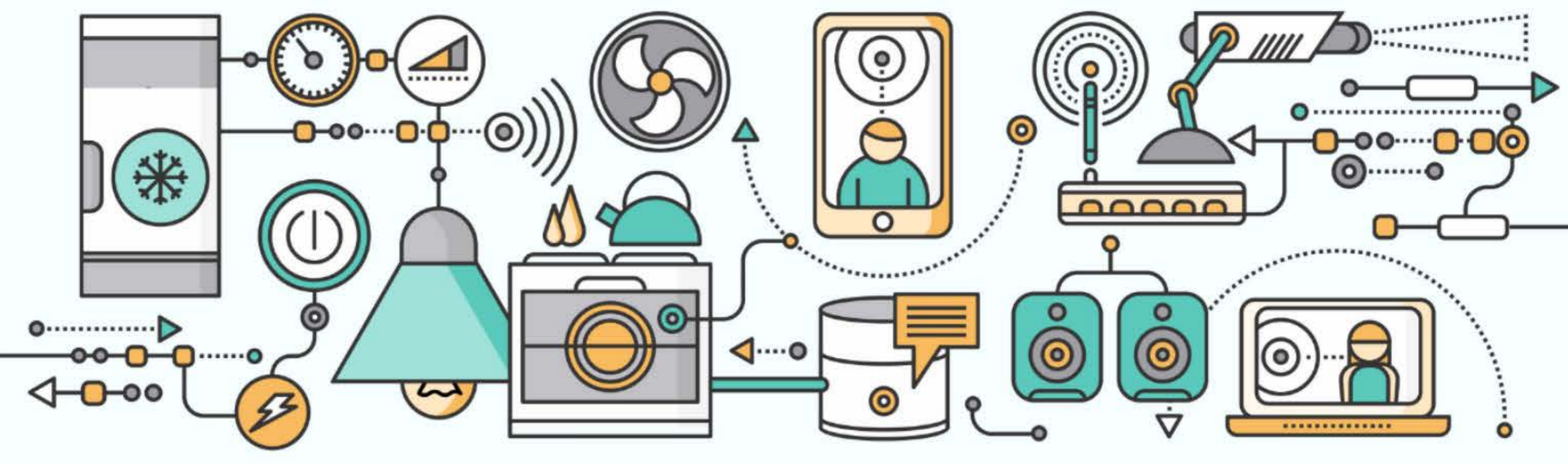


# It's No Longer About 'What's in the Box'

Product Learnings From a 30-Plus Year Bose Engineer



Bose [Follow](#)  
Apr 16, 2018 · 6 min read



Presented by **BOSE**



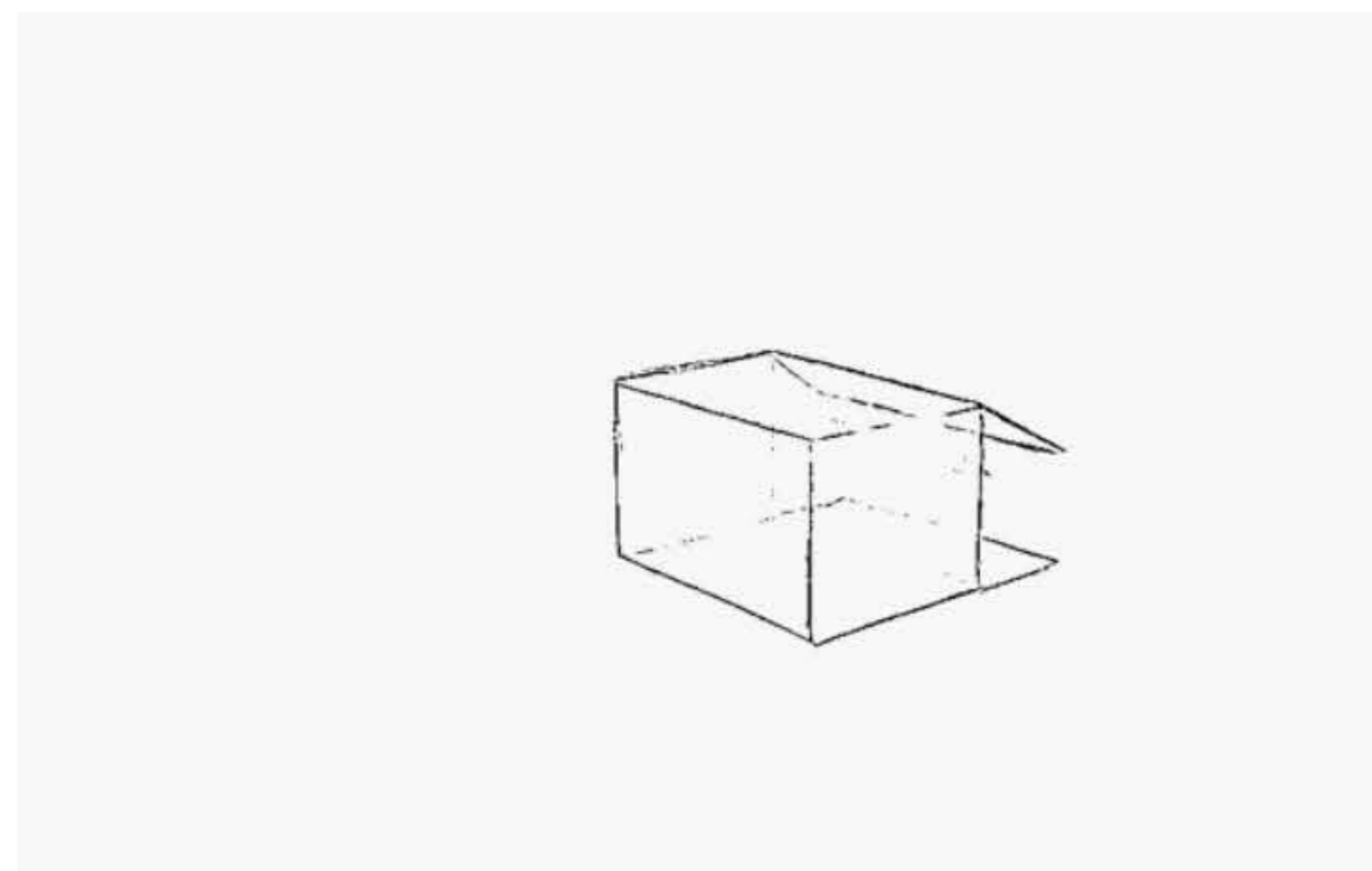
*The Sound of Innovation spoke with Ken Jacob—a 33-year veteran of Bose Corporation—to talk about the future of product in the new world of platforms. Here is what he had to say.*

**I**t's funny. When I envision how we will think and talk about products in the future, I don't really see the products themselves being the focus. Instead, it's going to be about *you*: you being more competitive; more capable; more of who you really are.

The truth is, when it comes to products and connected experiences, most of the things we'll be talking about in five years will not even have been thought of today. Nonetheless, there are visible trends that we can tease out when it comes to products and connected experiences.

Here are just a few of the macro trends I've seen, informed by my 30 plus years of working at Bose Corporation.

## It's No Longer Just About What's In the Box



For a long time the value of a product was pretty self contained: it was what was in the box. But this is radically changing. Now "what's in the box" is only a fraction of how the experience unfolds or takes place.

These days value is created not in, but rather around the product itself, in the *circuit* that goes from 'what's in the box'—speaker, headphone or whatever—through the cloud and back to the device.

Don't get me wrong. Object quality will always be important, but it's becoming less and less the sole focus. Companies like Amazon and Google are laying out a new infrastructure—the "electrical wiring" so to speak—that will serve as a base for everything we will build on top. In tomorrow's world platforms and ecosystems won't simply matter more: they will be the very framework we operate within. And it's these platforms that will define what we're capable of both technologically *and* as human beings.

In this new platform-oriented world, companies and products will need to strike a balance between being agnostic to other players, and deciding who to partner with.

There won't be any one winner in the new platform economy—each player will each continue to lean into what they do best. At Bose, for example, our motivation is to make new experiences possible. Sometimes we're able to accomplish this on our own, as we did with noise-cancellation. But when necessary we look for partners who are different enough in motivation that we are not duplicating our efforts, or competing to outspend in areas that don't make sense for us.

*We're moving away from the phase of 'one damn product after another.'*

In one scenario our hardware might give the user access to cloud value completely supplied by somebody else. Or we might come up with a better way of picking up your voice in the home, so that a device like Alexa simply understands you better. In yet another scheme, Bose could use our depth of knowledge of a user's preferences to provide additional value to streaming services. Each configuration will rely on the comparative strengths of the players involved.

## Products Should become more valuable over time

The most radical shift in our industry is the importance of software in building value across devices and experiences. Entire industries have been eaten by software because companies were not able to find a way to increase the value of their product over time.

We're moving away from the phase of 'one damn product after another'. The value of a product needs to increase over time, not stay constant or diminish. Some of the best experiences that we can imagine take place between people and between multiple devices. Not just single user, single device.

The obvious analogy is your smartphone: this device get *more* valuable over time. You find that the apps work on the same hardware, but now make your life better than it was before. There's actually a really poignant moment in the Steve Jobs movie: the killer app for the iPhone is that *it's a phone*. On the one hand, you might say "*that's it*"? But on the other hand, their greatest accomplishment was that they had created a platform. At the time no one knew all of the things that were going to work on an iPhone.

## Complexity Should Live on the Inside, Not the Outside

There's a common refrain among engineers: complexity on the inside; simplicity on the outside.

Research shows us that if people have to take a lot of little steps to see the benefit of a product or service, the drop-off in people who will take those steps is enormous. The second you add complexity, people will disproportionately opt out of the benefit. The goal is to bring a higher level of performance to the technology without sacrificing simplicity. This principle applies to software as much as hardware.

Entire industries are made or broken on the sheer concept of convenience alone. This is what happened with the streaming music revolution. People no longer have to have a wall full of CDs, they can just ask for it from their phone and there it is. And people obviously respond to that new convenience and buy into it.

But convenience is only one facet of quality. A truly innovative company will find ways to take a convenient product, and enhance that convenience with other features.

## Better Quality Should Intensify Emotion

When I was a kid, I taped my transistor radio to the handlebars of my bicycle. I had a strong emotional response to that transistor radio because it intensified my experience of life. That's what good technology does. The higher quality the product, the greater the intensity.

Products will increasingly be gauged by how they augment human potential. In this way of thinking, the real question becomes: does this product make you come alive because of what it can help you do? This is the mega-trend that I'm seeing everywhere.

Consumers want products and services that allow them to fluidly switch from one mode to another. And these products should allow consumers to become more vital and more competitive in everything that they do. For us, that includes the entire spectrum spanning the consumer's private experience, as well as their social life and work life: sanctuary, concert hall and business deal.

Whether it's developing an earphone setting that allows you to go beyond the natural capabilities of your hearing in a crowded environment, or simply perfecting the private experience of *hearing* music in your bedroom, technology changes our capacity to feel and experience life. This principle will only become more pronounced as connected technologies suffuse more and more of our everyday life.

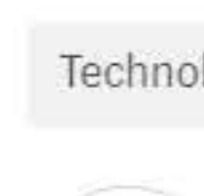
And with the emergence of data and the social layer of the internet, consumers can be even better served because we have a better sense of what's important to you. Products will both be personalized and they will enable personalization.

100



Sponsored by Bose, [The Sound of Innovation](#) explores the ways in which sound shapes our experience of the surrounding world.

Technology Productivity Design Tech Entrepreneurship



100 claps



**Bose**  
The official account for product launches and keeping tabs on the stuff we love like great music, new technology and more. For support follow @BoseService.

[Follow](#)



**The Sound of Innovation**

presented by Bose

[Follow](#)