

18 VIEWS

on the definition of

Design Management

HOW DO WORKING professionals define design management and how do their activities enhance an organization's day-to-day operations, identity, and business strategies? The executives we asked offered a variety of perspectives and insights. All see design as an essential corporate resource, but they make their cases in many different ways.



TIMOTHY BACHMAN,
PRINCIPAL,
BACHMAN MILLER
GROUP

Conventional wisdom tells us that design managers supervise the creators of tangible "things." These things are often used to fulfill or meet an organization's strategic goals. Yet, the real value offered by design management to an organization is its consistent orchestration and nurturing of shared

values and realities. Thus, a proficiency in *how* the organization's resources and assets should be expressed to continuously meet changing consumer and business demands is acquired.

Design management effectively masters change. It seizes opportunities to evolve, protect, and build memorable products and corporate identities. It works best when the entire organization adopts, understands, and shares the character, values, and promise of the organization's "genetic code." This genetic makeup (real-life stories, visual expressions, textual content, products, and service priorities) evolves as intangible and tangible assets that define the organization's identity.

Design management articulates simple explicit and implicit communications that mirror the organization's values. It nurtures individual

contributions that accurately express and interpret the organization's business objectives.

Design management is not a departmental or a supervisory role. It is a strategic and purposeful organizing process. Organizations that integrate design management as a continuously reformative activity within their culture easily survive competitive challenges and the subtle cultural and technological changes that cripple reactive organizations.



TORSTEN DAHLIN,
PRESIDENT,
SWEDISH INDUSTRIAL
DESIGN FOUNDATION

As a profession, design management strives to initiate and handle design strategies in boardroom decisions and to follow up with implementation and communication.

Design management strives to create understanding and awareness among personnel at all levels that conscious actions in even the smallest decisions are the core of design management.

Design management functions in all places and situations in which the organization, through its structure, products, and employees, makes decisions about customer experiences and product quality.



LIZBETH DOBBINS,
MANAGER,
CORPORATE BRAND-
ING AND IDENTITY,
UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

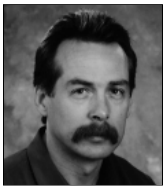
I could be profound or practical, but I think I'll be some of both.

I like to think of design as *vision*. Design communicates where we've been, where we are, or where we want to be. It's the signpost and guidepost for the future. Design can create comfort or discomfort, depending on the goal of its execution. Design is the ultimate vehicle to communicate intent. Penultimate

design is the execution of leadership vision.

I manage design strategically and tactically as a pure and essential element that supports our vision, which is in turn built upon our strategic plan. If the strategic plan changes, then our design work has to change along with the vision. The vision drives our design work. Design can crystallize senior management's thoughts and can help them move from the conceptual to the real world of implementation. In a very practical sense, vision needs to be communicated through actions, behaviors, the written word, and sounds, not just through design media.

I think that design management is visionary leadership.



PATRICK FRICKE,
MANAGER, GRAPHIC
AND VISUAL
INTERFACE DESIGN,
DESIGN RESOURCE
CENTER, EASTMAN
KODAK COMPANY

Let's face it, we do what we do because we want to make people respond—from the point of first exposure to the release of hard currency in order to own that product.

When I think of design management, of course, I think of design leadership and brand management and brand leadership. In the corporate environment of a manufacturing company, a product's design is yet another signal emitted to

the consumer, along with all the other signals a company emits consciously and unconsciously as communication, advertising and promotions, service support, product reliability, pricing, and so on. How consumers respond to this input and how they respond to the experience they have with that product results in associations that are tied to the brand. Effective design managers are linked with strategic marketing, as well as with engineering. Effective design management produces compelling value—tangible and intangible—for the company, *and the company knows it.*

On the intangible side, design management provides an emotional connection (through the

product, in this case) to the consumer. That experience over time and through the out-of-box experience, presentation of information, material and components, writing style, product use, and eventual disposal influence and shape one's thinking about the company, which shapes brand loyalty. Effective design management contributes to the development of customer profiles and value propositions that drive commercialization as information that is translated into product form, color, texture, and interaction style.

On the tangible side is process. Excellent design practices influence corporate identity, affect day-to-day operations, and are consistent with the strategic goals of an organization. Effective design process drives involvement in the product development process. Good design leadership connects design and usability disciplines early in this process. The relevance here is the relationship and impact the design process has on cycle-time goals, manufacturing efficiencies, and time-to-market schedules.

Expanding design management/leadership roles and extolling the value of design to the company are the subject of constant scrutiny internally and a source of very stimulating conversations certainly. Are we there yet? Not necessarily. Is there progress? Absolutely.



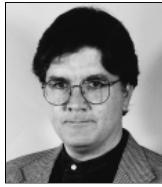
MIRANDA MOSS,
PRINCIPAL,
YAMAMOTO MOSS

Design, when used correctly, is the most effective way to attract the right people to your brand and communicate your brand attributes to your target market. Design management ensures that your brand strategy is consistently implemented in the design of all media used to communicate your brand. Successful design management requires discipline and interpretation of your design strategy through all media to ensure your investment is protected and the design is relevant to your target audience.

Complex business arrangements, such as co-branding, global distribution, acquisitions, and product and service expansion, need rigorous design management to protect the image and awareness of the brands involved.

Design should support your business strategy and be focused on meeting the needs of your target audience. Based on key business opportunities, the design management process aids decision making in our fast-paced competitive economy. New product introductions and line extensions are more cost effective when created using a clearly articulated design and branding strategy. In addition, acquisitions can be easier to phase into the existing brand

identity system when it is clearly defined. With discipline and clear internal communication of your design strategy, any communications will be assets in promoting brand awareness and equity.



MARTIN GIERKE,
DIRECTOR,
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN,
BLACK & DECKER

I view the role of design management as one of facilitation. In order to maximize the productivity of available resources, managers must understand and quiet the environmental factors that compete for the attention of their people. These could include technical, as well as organizational, “noise makers.”

Providing clarity and direction while allowing freedom to explore requires subtle, yet focused, communication. Building and nurturing a team of internal and external contributors who raise each other’s level of performance and enhance the creative experience is the primary obligation of design management.

Design management can enhance the strategic goals of an organization through vision leadership—that is, with the help of 2-D and 3-D materials—thus providing a reflection of the organization’s aspirations. Day-to-day operations can be enhanced through effective participation in the activities that give substance to those aspirations. Ultimately, the identity of the organization will be a function of the balance between the visionary and the practical. Design management, in particular, is well suited to help strike such a balance.



TIM GIRVIN,
PRINCIPAL, TIM
GIRVIN DESIGN INC.

Design management is the practice of giving definition and voice to a brand—in whatever manner, dimensional or otherwise, it may be articulated to the world.

Design, from an etymological perspective, means “scribing”—a gesture about how an organization expresses its ideology, culture, products, and services. These assets are carefully guided so that the message is consistent and clear in all forms of expression. This coherency of message builds strength in the facilitation of strategic organizational functions, such as marketing, sales, and operations.

Although the word management creates decidedly tactical associations, what most organizations crave is “leadership,” which is the necessary complement to management. Leadership is

inherently inspirational—defining the vision and pointing in the direction of possibilities.



FENNEMIEK GOMMER
MDM,
PARTNER, SCAN
MANAGEMENT
CONSULTANTS

Most organizations share a common goal: to be perceived as better and different than their competitors.

For years, the focus has been on producing better products or services. As a result, quality levels have generally gone up, noticeable differences have become smaller, and the influence of intangibles on people’s overall perception of companies and products has grown.

Design management could be described as visual perception management. It contributes to realizing strategic goals if it ensures that the organization’s visual language is consistent, distinct, and relevant for all its internal and external stakeholders. Design management is responsible for the design, implementation, maintenance, and constant evaluation of all items that are part of the total brand experience, from the instruction leaflet to the serviceman’s uniform. For perception to become reality, design management needs to be one of its creators.



DR. JÜRGEN
HAÜSLER,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
INTERBRAND
ZINTZMEYER & LUX
GMBH, COLOGNE

In essence, design management challenges the most popular misperception of design management—that it is basically a contradiction in terms.

Meaningful design has, of course, a purpose and needs to succeed in an environment of scarce resources, limited time, and organizational power struggles. Noteworthy management requires highly creative thinking.

The goal of design management in the context of an identity program is to foster a company’s, organization’s, or brand’s competitiveness. It does so by clearly and consistently communicating corporate or brand values. It is thereby instrumental in creating a distinguishable profile in an evermore-complex market environment. It strives to be effective (to make a difference) and again to be effective (to require as few resources as possible). It is accountable for results, and its success can be measured in terms of improving brand value.



TETSUYUKI HIRANO,
PRESIDENT, HIRANO
& ASSOCIATES INC.

In ideal terms, design management is a holistic, long-term activity, encompassing all levels of corporate functions.

In long-term relationships, products, communications, environments, and services can be treated as a system. We use the concepts of “bridge” and “network” to express this sense of connectivity in all its strategic power—that is, design functions across all corporate activities, as well as in projects from start to finish. Embedding design in all development processes on a day-to-day basis helps companies evolve in response to new opportunities and unforeseen conditions in unstable markets. Corporate identity becomes an expression of the totality of what the company is, reflecting the integrity, both internal and external, of its products, services, and activities.



THOMAS A. KELLEY,
GENERAL MANAGER,
IDEO DESIGN AND
PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT

Design management is about *applied innovation*: capturing the talent and resources available inside and outside your organization to create new products, new environments, and new user experiences. The growing interest in design management in the business community—which I measure by the steadily increasing number of MBA resumes crossing my

desk—comes from the recognition of design as a valuable strategic tool.

Especially in mature industries, where quality has already been fine-tuned and costs have been continuously trimmed, design remains a powerful source of differentiation. Successful companies manage design in support of a broad range of strategic initiatives:

- Strengthening brand identities
- Fending off low-cost competition
- Reaping the benefits of new technologies
- Renewing connections to the customer
- Fostering a culture of innovation

These business goals have always been an implicit part of good design management, but more companies are looking to their design programs for leadership in reaching them.



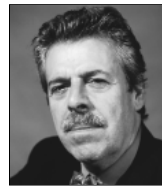
TIM LARSEN,
PRESIDENT, LARSEN
DESIGN +
INTERACTIVE

As companies have come to recognize the enormous power their visual representation possesses to communicate, motivate, and inspire, design management has become *asset* management. Effective asset management reduces costs and builds value. Implementing systems that ensure a company is consistently represented over time decreases

marketing costs as impressions build on one another to create image equity.

Beyond asset management, design management is about *attitude* management. It represents not just a company’s state of affairs, but its state of mind, as well. As a company struggles to differentiate itself in the marketplace, its attitude is often the only critical difference between it and its competitors. Warm, friendly, professional, edgy—each evokes an emotion that can be visually portrayed. Good design management understands an organization’s personality and communicates its attributes.

At its best, design management is design *leadership*. It respects the past while guiding the present with an openness to the future.



JEREMY REWSE-
DAVIES,
DESIGN DIRECTOR,
LONDON
TRANSPORT

My definition of design management is *harnessing design for a common purpose*. This purpose may be industrial and commercial, or it may be social.

I believe design management can enhance a company’s performance in four areas:

1. Products that provide the service
2. Environments from which the products or service are delivered
3. Graphics that explain or promote the service or product
4. Corporate identity that identifies the providers of products or services



PETER TRUSSLER,
VICE PRESIDENT,
CORPORATE DESIGN
GROUP, NORTEL

Design management is defined principally from a business and customer context, and it starts with a well-defined value proposition that is strategic to the client, followed by clear statements of vision, mission, goals, strategies, and action plans that link to those of the client and its businesses.

Design management is about ensuring that the energy of the organization is expended in programs that are essential and strategic. This is achieved when linkages between goals, strategies, plans, and processes have been clearly established and shared by design management. As a result, all employees in the organization can see the alignment of their work with high-level strategic priorities.

Fundamental to achieving this level of organization and management maturity is the adoption of a management/leadership system spanning a wide range of elements, including organizational values, performance expectations, communications, and focus on external and internal customers, as well as constant monitoring of overall results.

If the value proposition of the design organization is strongly associated with renewal, reinvention, and out-of-the-box thinking, it is essential that design management be active in the executive forums responsible for giving direction and determining investment in advanced product research.



RAYMOND TURNER
FCSD,
GROUP DESIGN
DIRECTOR, BAA
PLC

Design is critical to achieving corporate mission. This means using design to help provide customers with what they want in a way that adds value to our business. In practical terms, we do this by *defining* what customers and other stakeholders want, and then by developing the mechanisms for *delivering* it.

Definition means being clear about the

- Vision that will enable us to achieve our corporate mission
- Nature of our product and how it will develop in the future
- Design policies and strategies to realize those products
- Basic identity we need to compete successfully in the marketplace

Delivery is about the practical support to make all this happen.

- Design processes that make it easy for managers to brief for, and review, design work
- Design standards that eliminate reinvention
- Design managers that help the business interpret product definitions and design policies
- Developing design awareness among managers so that their individual design decisions help create a company that can be an industry leader



GARY VAN DEURSEN,
CORPORATE
DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, THE
STANLEY WORKS

Design management is the key strategic innovator helping to shape and establish the end user's perception of a product and, therefore, of the manufacturer. It is the consumer's perception of a product at point of purchase that establishes a promise of quality, performance, and value. This promise must be delivered by the product in order to establish the credibility and long-term financial success of a corporation.

Design management determines the quality level of designs by setting product strategy, goals, and expectations, as well as selecting and directing the staff or consultant performing the work. In the management of design, it is critical that the manager be highly skilled in design. It is here that he or she can contribute significantly by critiquing, challenging, and selecting the best solutions.



BRIAN VOGEL,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT
GENESIS INC.

Successful design management demands structure and discipline. The structure provides a template to follow, allowing you to focus on content and creative solutions rather than process. This template encompasses keys to sound business and project management practice, such as listening to the problem, setting realistic

expectations, providing adequate thinking and planning, converging quickly to the best solution, being relentless in meeting schedule and budget objectives, and allowing sufficient prototyping to know you can declare victory. Discipline is required to stick to the process.

Done well, design management can have a positive impact throughout the organization. Just as successful design management in a well-run project prevents uncontrolled "scope creep," so it also averts similar disasters in a well-managed company. Successful design management does not allow the existence of "sweatshops;" it sets the work ethic within the team, but also provides for balance in employees' lives.



SOHRAB VOSSOUGH, I,
PRESIDENT, ZIBA
DESIGN

Design management

connects a company with the world around it. It is an integration process that gives a company a single voice and conveys a clear message to people inside and outside a company.

Design management is like conducting an orchestra—in which each individual plays different notes. When guided and shaped by a conductor, these different notes become beautiful music. Design management is the process of guiding and shaping individual efforts to achieve a larger goal.

Design management requires a delicate balance between art and commerce. To be successful, a design manager must maintain control without limiting creativity. A design manager must reconcile change with consistency. A design manager must communicate without preaching. Design management is itself as varied and changing as human experience.

Designers should extend their influence at every level in the organization. The greater the penetration of design, the stronger the company. In great companies like Federal Express, Nike, and

Microsoft, the greatest contribution of design is nonvisual. The most important contributions of design are

- 1) To focus attention on the human side of business
 - 2) To create a passion for the power and magic of getting details right
 - 3) To communicate a positive vision of the future
- Successful designers should contribute to every aspect of corporate activity through creativity, innovation, and passion.

To be successful, design should be everywhere. From architecture to service delivery, design should be used to shape human experience. Communication is the essence of design management. Products, uniforms, buildings, Web sites—design management can make a contribution in any arena in which communication takes place. The newest frontier is process design. Designers should look beyond the conventional activities, such as packaging, graphics, and product design. Designers have an important role to play in defining how companies use information. How is production information documented and communicated? How are new employees trained? How can the customer experience be simplified and refined? ♦

(Reprint #9893EXP14)