

A WHITE PAPER FROM LEITZ.

**WORK**  
BETTER BY  
**DESIGN**

 **LEITZ**<sup>®</sup>



*This White Paper was written and researched by Andrew Crosthwaite, Planning Director of BLAC Agency in London with considerable input from Nina Saller of xbeyonds and Wolf Leonhardt from ipdd.*

*We are grateful for their valued contributions and have listed their biographies at the back of this paper.*

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## INTRODUCTION

To state that the world of work is changing is to state the obvious. We do more of our work on the move. We work in different patterns. We use digital tools that didn't exist five years ago. Some of us are doing jobs that didn't even exist five years ago. Looking forward, the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence suggests that many of the jobs we do now will simply not exist in the future.

We seem to live in a world of perpetual upgrade, like Olympic athletes striving to gain a fraction more speed, a performance edge that makes the difference between a gold medal and anonymity. And just as in many Olympic events, 'artistic impression' is an important part of performance; so some may see 'design' as having a similar relationship to performance in products and processes. As we will discuss, design is much more fundamental than that.

All too often we only think (if we think at all) about design in terms of the visible surface of objects. Something is beautifully or well designed if we like its aesthetics. And of course liking is very subjective.

Design is playing a huge role in the evolution of work and the workplace, although it is something we frequently take for granted, or don't consciously notice. We are all too often oblivious to how design, especially good design, can enhance not only productivity and effectiveness, but also our well-being and enjoyment of our working lives.

### **Design is everywhere around us.**

Every part of our made environment has been designed. And in the case of work, work places and work materials, constantly, (sometimes invisibly), evolving. Beyond products and materials many companies

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**'Design is a way of thinking that helps large organisations, small and medium-sized enterprises, change the way they work.'**

Design Council, 2015

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are employing good design to workplaces and even the work methodology itself.

As a recent report from **Invision** put it: 'Design is changing the way we work... when an organisation applies the principles of design to its strategies and structures, it's making a conscious decision to innovate at all levels.'

Increasingly, design is an economic driver. As the **Design Council's** report in 2015 claimed: 'Great design can change lives, communities and organisations for the better. It can create better places to live, bring communities together, and can transform business and public services. Design is a way of thinking that helps large organisations, small and medium-sized enterprises, change the way they work.'

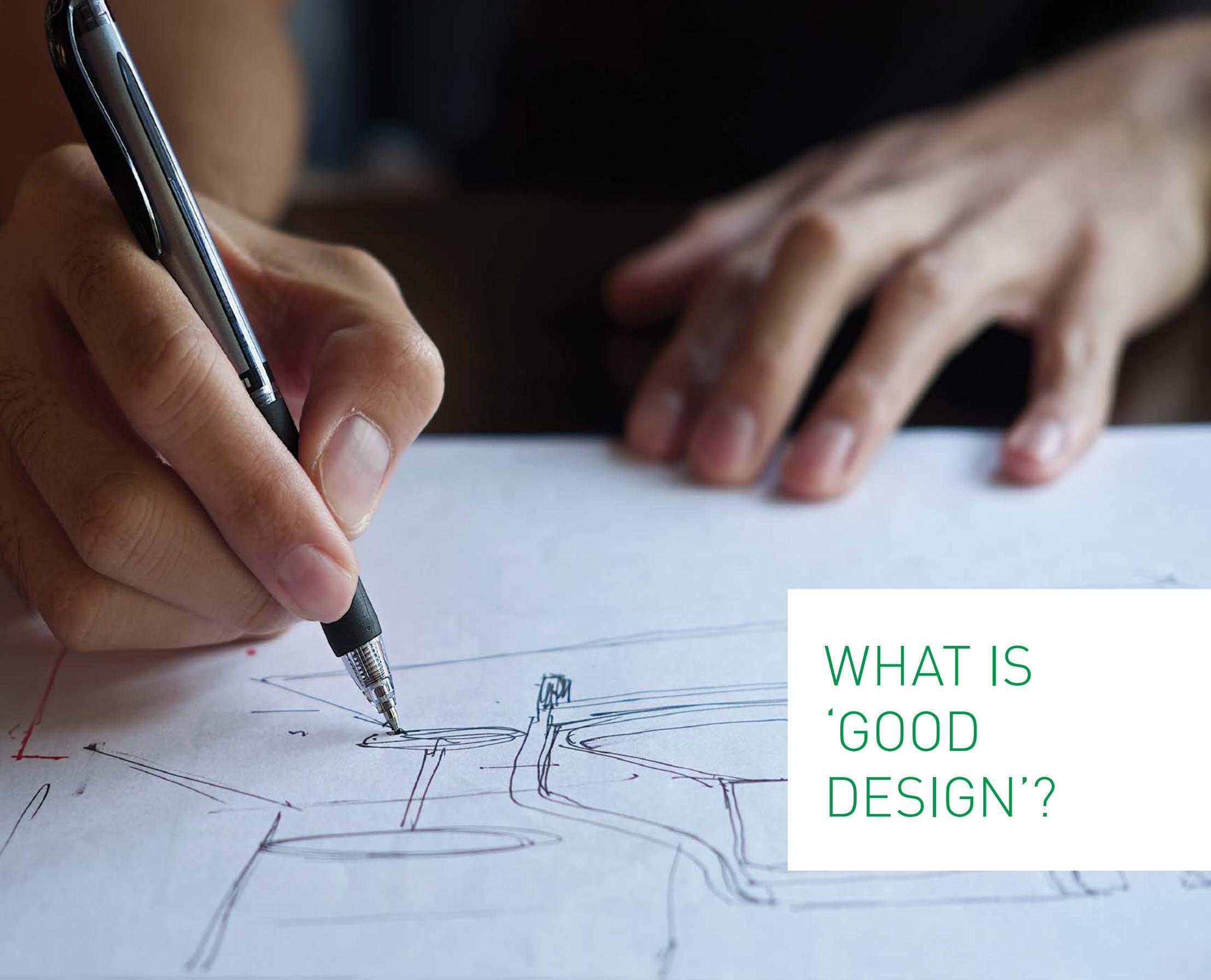
The surface is just a small part of the whole picture. A veneer on the visible tip of an iceberg, whereas underneath, design is much more than that.

Design at work covers an increasingly large footprint. It begins with the traditional

approach to the tools and materials we work with, both through breakthrough innovation - the never seen before - but also through optimising the technology that we already have, such as designing longer lasting batteries into smartphones, creating multi-functional tools.

But design is influential on the environments we work in and even our work processes. Not simply are they fit for purpose, but are they places where we feel a sense of belonging? How are tasks organised and allocated, how can work flow efficiently?

This paper will explore all of these aspects as well as their ultimate conclusion - the structures of companies, the ways they operate internally and interact with other organisations in their supply chain, with customers and consumers. Good design can, and should, influence all of these things. ■



WHAT IS  
'GOOD  
DESIGN'?

## WHAT IS 'GOOD DESIGN'?

When asked what 'good design' is, most people would talk about what something looks like; they may mention simplicity; they may refer to something being fit for purpose or working properly.

They probably wouldn't take issue with the '10 Rules for Good Design' written in the 1970s by **Dieter Rams**, who led design for **Braun**.



Dieter Rams, 2013

Rams was part of a 'golden thread' of design theory, over the last 100 years.

This ran from **Sullivan's** late 19th Century maxim that 'form follows function', leading to the modernist architects and designers of the 1920s and 30s, best exemplified by **Bauhaus**, the art school in Germany that combined craft and fine art and was famous for the approach to design that it publicised and taught throughout the world.

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**'We are by nature – by deep biological nature – visual tactile creatures. Therefore design is moving from being merely functional, abstract and ideological to highly emotional. "This is good design", or "this works" is not anymore the decisive factor in the purchase. We now live in times where smart and thoughtful features are a plus, whereas flawless functionality itself almost has become a mandatory quality.'**

Nina Saller

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Through to the short-lived but influential Ulm school which espoused the belief that people could be educated and encouraged to a better life through superior architecture and design.

Although the '10 Rules' were written over 40 years ago – virtually pre-history in the commercial world, where a business book is perceived to be out of date in a couple of years, Rams' principles still tend to be widely referenced in the world of design.

Fortuitously, perhaps, the design wheel has turned so that the minimalist style that he espoused is relevant to much design today – including in the workspace.

More significantly still, both **Steve Jobs** and his chief designer **Jony Ive** cited Rams when talking about what they tried to achieve with Apple, the reference point for contemporary product design for the man in the street – or indeed the office.

## Good design ...

is **innovative**  
 makes a product **useful**  
 is **aesthetic**  
 makes a product **understandable**  
 is **unobtrusive**  
 is **honest**  
 is **long-lasting**  
 is **thorough down to the last detail**  
 is **environmentally friendly**  
 is **as little design as possible**

Steve Jobs said, 'Design is a funny word. Some people think design means how it looks. But, of course, if you dig deeper, it's how it really works.'

Appreciation of the importance of both the aesthetic and the functional is much older than this. The British artist and craftsman **William Morris** said: 'Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful' over 100 years ago. But he was clearly willing to accept an either/or. In the modern world, we increasingly want both.

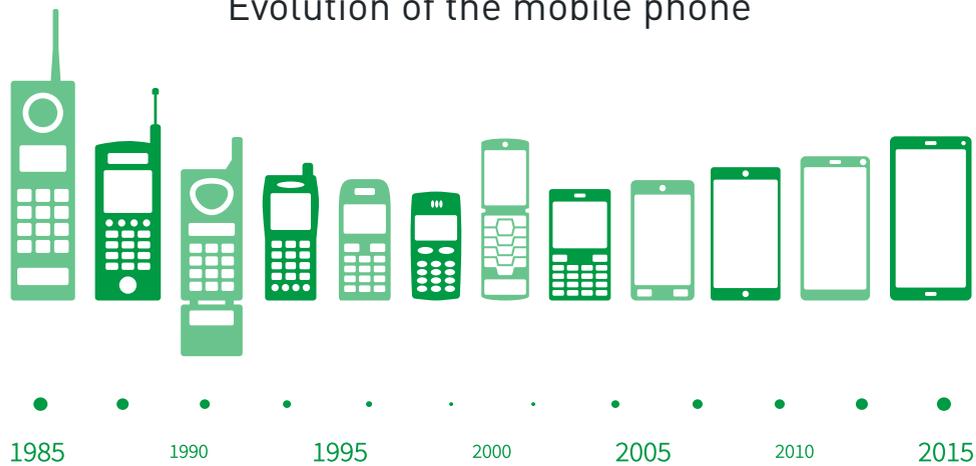
We may like to think of ourselves as rational beings, but virtually every purchase choice we make, from jewellery to life insurance has a strong emotional element.

We tend to buy with the heart and then post-rationalise with the head.

Is there a better combination of form and function and emotion than Dyson? **James Dyson** is under no illusion what is important in his company. He said, 'I don't believe in brands. People buy our product, not our company. You're only as good as your last product'. But an ugly innovative Dyson wouldn't sell; nor would a beautiful one with no competitive edge.

The genius of the company lies in innovation and superior performance, combined with an unmistakable design language. And whether he admits to it or not – that is what is at the heart of the Dyson brand.

## Evolution of the mobile phone



Some aspects of Rams' tenets are also even more relevant today than when they were first written. 'Going hand in hand with new technology' resonates with modern life more than ever, when phones are our constant companions and so many of us live in a digital parallel universe.

Making sense of technology is a continual challenge. Rams says of design, 'At its best it is self-explanatory'. The intuitive nature of so much of what we use (because we certainly wouldn't understand its operation otherwise) is for most of us a necessity. We no longer read instruction manuals – at best we watch **YouTube**.

Thus, increasingly, design needs to lead us unconsciously to the right solution.

Creating products that are long lasting (Rams was focused on classic, enduring design) and environmentally friendly, have even more relevance today. Rams refers to avoiding the "throwaway society" (a term only just coming into use at the time of writing) and his views may have reflected growing environmental concern, but certainly not the accepted behaviours of the day.

We have a paradoxical relationship with product longevity.

On the one hand a post-recessionary mind-set, and an environmental conscience means preservation and recycling are on-trend. But in certain markets, the drivers of technology and fashion mean that products - mobile phones for example - went through a rapid life cycle in size, shape, features and style.

Nevertheless, what is inside (components) and outside (how wasteful or excessive the packaging and presentation are) have become fundamental to the Customer Relationship Management/sustainability credentials of companies and brands, which can be legislative or voluntarily taken on to show good corporate citizenship. Design is the selection of materials – as well as how they are structured.

'Good design is as little design as possible' also strikes a contemporary chord.

We see a trend to simplicity in everything from logos – for example **Google** and **eBay's** recent re-design/refresh – to colour palettes (where brands try to 'own' a colour in their category), to car dashboards,

where multiple dials are out of fashion – soon to be followed by drivers themselves.

Some of these refinements may seem almost invisible and often result in public comments about money being wasted; a child of 10 could have done this and so on. But the amount of thought that goes into this process is invisible.

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**'Just because a logo or product is more unobtrusive or reduced, doesn't mean there is less design behind it. The "less is more" trend is rooted in the need of visual noise reduction within highly complex environments. The user does not need to see the complexity that lies beneath the surface.'**

Nina Saller

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Many of today's advanced devices don't obviously look 'technological'. There is a less is more feel to them. **Vivian Rosenthal**, co-founder of **Google's** '30 Weeks' design program recently made the point that 'People are gravitating towards wanting as much functionality in as sleek and minimal a structure as possible'.

Or as **Antoine de Saint-Exupery**, author of 'Le Petit Prince' not just perhaps the finest children's book, but an essential manual for life, wrote, 'Perfection is attained not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing more to remove'. ■

### Summary:

There is no doubt that technology has changed the way we design and use products, but the essential principles of "good design" still remain. The speed and voracity of consumerism has caused Rams' original principles to evolve into something that includes not just beauty, but also purpose and intuition.



## DESIGN AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Although it may seem a simplistic definition, most businesses are based on solving problems, profitably.

Business is about identifying consumer needs (unsolved, or partially and inadequately solved by other companies), and providing an alternative and hopefully better, solution. How this solution is positioned can vary substantially – from increased ease and convenience, to lower price, to added value (service or features), to product performance.

The way in which the business is organised and presents itself needs to fit with the intermediate customer or end user proposition.

“**Design Thinking**” is not a precisely defined term, but like good business, comes from creating the world around the customer (whether internal or external). **IDEO** call it: ‘A human-centred approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.’

It’s about seeing the issues from the customer’s perspective. It involves taking a holistic view – what is the total picture, not just an element in isolation. Where traditionally we thought about identifying problems and giving them the best solutions, design is more wide ranging – looking for the problem behind the problem, exploring different solutions.

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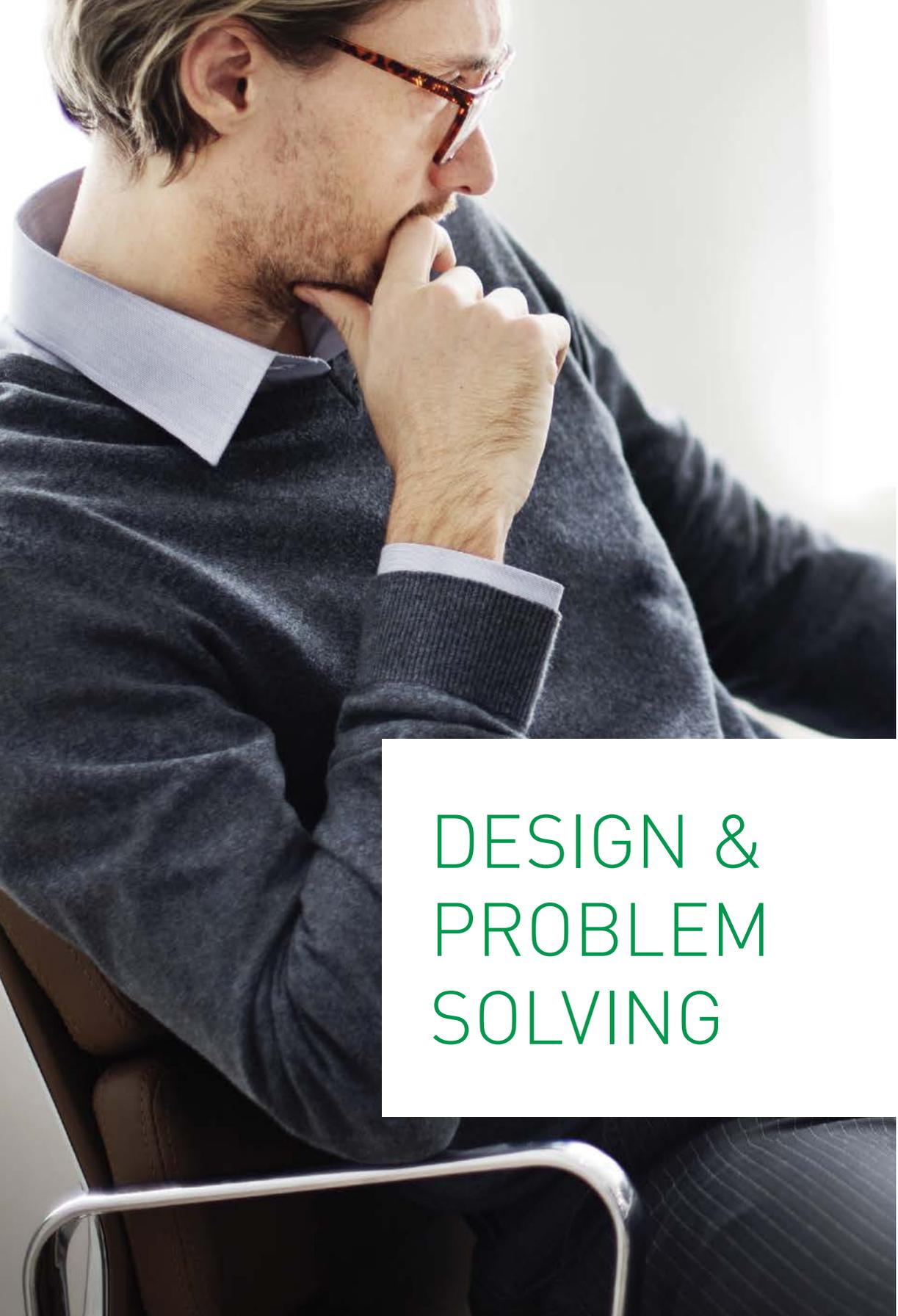
**‘To generate a flawless problem-solution fit, you always start with the same questions. What problem do we have to solve? For whom are we doing this? Why are we doing this? How do we want to do this? What do you want to achieve? After answering these questions the product is already quite well defined.’**

Wolf Leonhard

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Design is increasingly at the heart of new businesses. Most people reading this will have heard of **TED** talks. Many will have watched at least one on **YouTube**. Significantly fewer though will know that the acronym stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design.

Originally the talks focused on the creative industries, but they have quickly evolved to address business strategy, social issues, the larger forces that influence and govern how we think and act.



## DESIGN & PROBLEM SOLVING



In short, design is more than creativity alone. It's about problem solving, enhancement and refinement in our lives, as human beings, not just as consumers or businesspeople.

Businesses today underestimate, at their peril, design's influence in how companies are organised, what they are like to work in and the products and services they produce. ■

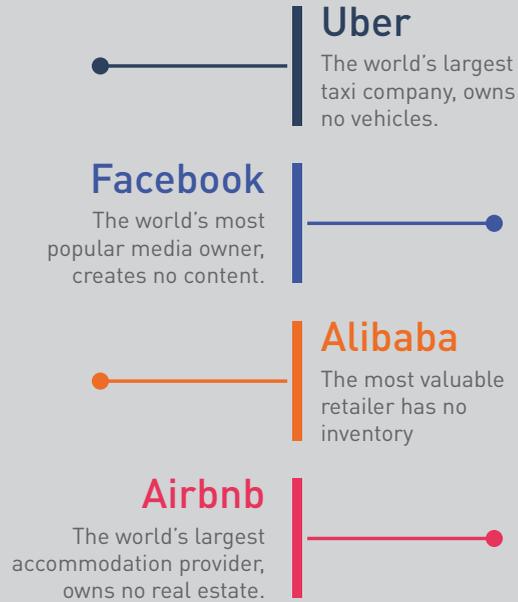
**Summary:**

Design can help target specific issues that need resolving and can ultimately help businesses and individuals to improve on all aspects of how they operate.



# THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF DESIGNERS IN BUSINESS

## THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF DESIGNERS IN BUSINESS



The company brand or Intellectual Property can be as important as the company's bottom line (and often exceeds it in value – think of **Airbnb**, **Uber** or any other game changer in service). So how a company runs its business, the way it is set up, the purpose and image it projects is vastly more significant now than 10 years ago.

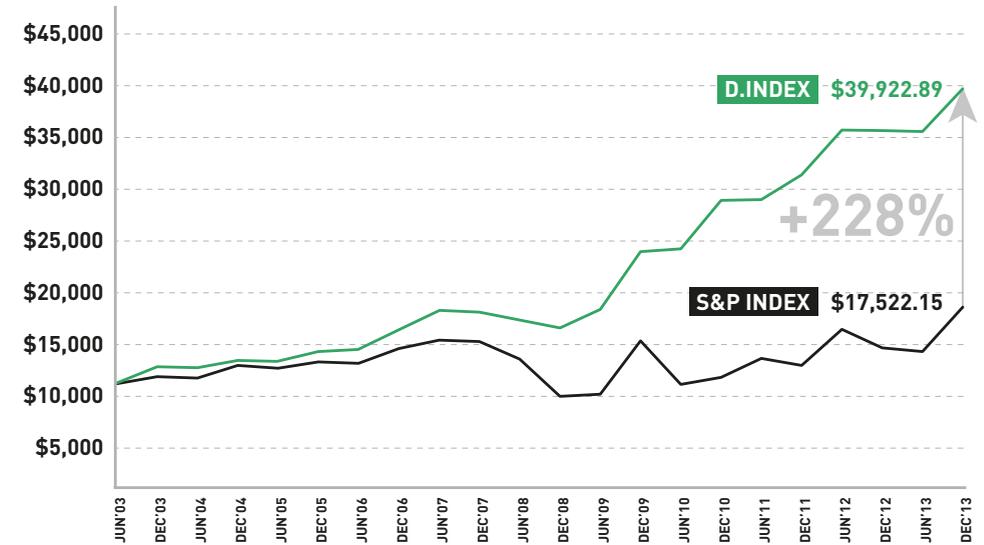
Against this background, forward-looking companies are using the principles of design to guide how they are structured and approach their markets.

Rather than focusing on processes (and the inevitable issues around titles and hierarchies), or products, the approach is based on designing the company around the customer, ensuring multiple touchpoints which all deliver the same experience- real or virtual.

This goes beyond efficiency to delivering superior performance, or greater fit with existing or potential needs and as a result, create happier, more fulfilled, better served customers.

With increased customer facing roles across companies, understanding not just the business, but what it stands for, living its brand values are no longer just the responsibility of Sales and Marketing.

Most businesses today talk about designing a strong **User Experience (UX)** for a website but this design approach has expanded to the design of **Customer Experiences (CX)** embracing an entire process on and offline.



Source: DMI Design Value Index, built by Motiv

With the rapid transformation that comes with new technology (everything from 3D printing to virtual workforces), the structures of companies will be evolving rather than fixed.

One role that is gaining ground and top-level endorsement, is that of Chief Design Officer. In the last few years **PepsiCo**, **Hyundai** and **Philips** have all created this post at board level. The EVP of Design at **Nokia**, reports directly to the CEO, while **Samsung** took it a step further by making its former creative head its CEO.

Leading companies are seeing design as central to the products or services they provide. Not a veneer of styling on top of it.

There's empirical evidence that this type of approach is good for business. In 2014 the **Design Management Institute** compared the fortunes of 'design centric companies' with the S&P index and found a 200%+ gap.

However, the bar is being continuously raised – as a 2016 article in **Fastcodesign** noted, 'In the past, business competition was between companies with good design and not-so-good design. In the future, companies with good design will compete against companies with good design. So the competitive advantage will be on internal design leadership, not just design alone'. ■

### Summary:

The rise and success of design-centric businesses has driven organisations to innovate in a way that was never previously the case. Design pervades every aspect of a business to help push change in a positive, and relevant direction, resulting in improved customer experience.

## HOW DESIGN LEADS & REFLECTS CHANGING WORK PATTERNS

Design is starting to take a leading role in company strategy and company structure. How does this translate into the office environment?

10 years ago, the challenges for companies in designing offices were very different from those of today and tomorrow.

If there was a “head office”, then proximity to conurbations, quality of transport links were a prerequisite, otherwise there wouldn't be enough people in the catchment area.

If the majority of the workforce was centrally located and in the same place for most of the time, then space management was a key issue – how to put the maximum number of people in the minimum amount of space and keep them functional, if not always happy?

If someone was going to be tethered to a desk for an entire morning, then the design requirements for sustained comfort in seating were clear.

With the need to give more and more people access to technology, the position of cabling was as important as the position of people.

The work environment has changed and the attitudes of people who make up the “office” workforce of today have changed at the same time. An **IBM** European study, ‘**The Mobile Working Experience**’ showed that people who regularly work remotely from the office report problems

with collaborating and communicating with others, with half the sample complaining about this.

**Dell's ‘Evolving Workplace’** study found that more than one third of global workers perceive remote working as ‘eroding team spirit within the workplace’.

Key questions for many companies now are “**what is an office**”, “**what is an office for?**” And if they can answer these questions, how can we best design it to meet our needs?

The customer in this case is the internal one, translated into an increasingly demanding workforce with higher standards.

For some people the ideal will continue to be a centralised workplace. For others it will be more of a social place, where employees can come together to meet informally, to exchange ideas and then leave.

Instead of somewhere people have to go to, the modern office is somewhere people choose to go to (or not). Staff are now customers whose time is to be competed for. If your home is a more enjoyable and fulfilling place to work than the office, you'll choose (and be allowed to choose) to stay at home.

Recent examples of this include the new **Instagram** office (predictably) in California which has been described by **Fortune Magazine** as ‘selfie worthy’.

## HOW DESIGN LEADS & REFLECTS CHANGING WORK PATTERNS




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**‘One of the main differences in the interior design of the building is how it matches the look and feel of the actual Instagram app, explained Head of Design Ian Spalter. The office space is mostly white, with pops of color coming from screens and framed Instagram photos from its users’.**

Source: Fortune.com

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Moving out of California there are many co-working companies that have incorporated a collaborative working practice into their design and office configuration. Larger organisations like **wework.com** are already in 12 countries and are providing outsourced work solutions for some of the largest companies in the world including **Microsoft, Marriott** and **HSBC**. ■

#### Summary:

Our working environments and working practices have been influenced and honed by design, affecting so many different aspects of our daily working lives. Its no longer simply about going to a building where you do your work; its about enjoying the space you work in, its about being in a space that helps you achieve more. As one of Wework’s senior designers, Jeremiah Britton put it in a Creator interview, ‘You feel like you’re actually helping people love coming to work every day’.

# THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN PROJECTING THE COMPANY BRAND

## THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN PROJECTING THE COMPANY BRAND

Just as no one talked about work/life balance before the mid 1980s, so corporate or company culture was a little used term until the same time. Now, rather than the numbers of people to be accommodated, the culture or beliefs of a company is a starting point for designers in the office environment.

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**‘Core values are defined by the people behind the brand and by designing the products, we have to understand their thinking, their background and behavior in creating products’.**

Wolf Leonhard

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When one office looked pretty much like another, discerning differences was much more difficult. Now more and more companies recognise space as one of the most powerful vehicles for communicating a brand – and, by extension, building a business.

The extent to which this happens is quite varied. A recent report from Steelcase shows that across the globe, although **70% of companies have logos and advertising through the workspaces**, a sizeable minority are still relatively anonymous: **40% don’t reflect the brand colour palette** in the design of furnishings, **over 60% make no reference to the history of the company**.

For people working in places like this, they could be working for any company.

As businesses begin to understand the importance of projecting who they are, what they believe in, a company is now more likely to be asked by a designer about its values, the type of behaviours it wishes to promote, what they want the worker’s experience to feel like than where they need cabling or how many gender specific washrooms they are going to require.

For retailers this is not new, a visit to an **Apple Store** or **Nike Town** in any major city will instantly show how this philosophy has been embraced to create a customer experience. So perhaps companies should be thinking of their offices as a way to design an internal brand experience.

Positively, this would encourage companies to think more deeply about themselves. To consider what they want to be seen to stand for, not just what products and services they provide.

People are more interested in the brand behind the company than ever before. And this includes the people going to work there. Having a fully joined up brand means that values, attitudes, behaviours and outward presentation need to be in alignment.

In an article on internal branding in the **Harvard Business Review**, the design of premises was identified as one of the key components of communicating the brand: ‘By incorporating the brand vision into these employee touchpoints, companies, over time inculcate the vision into the

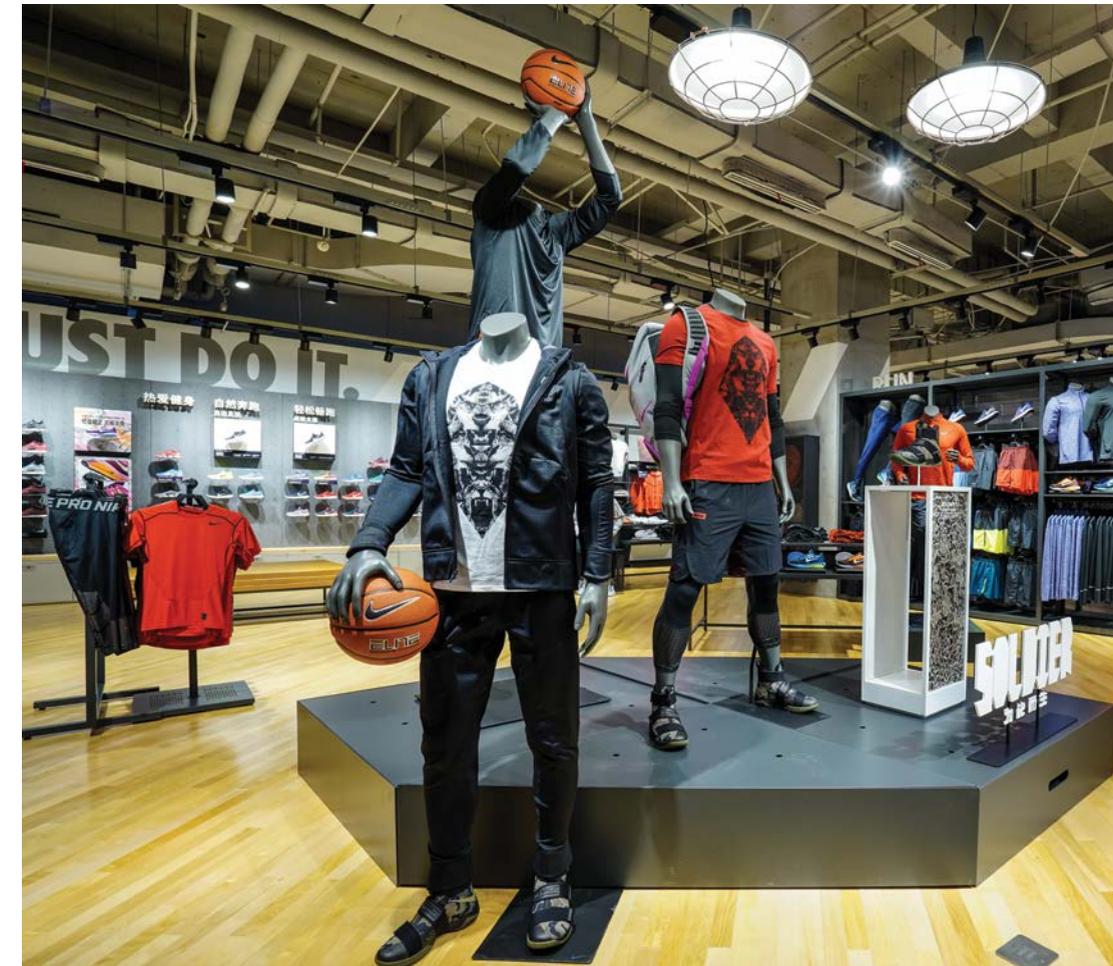
employee experience to the extent that on-brand behaviour becomes instinctive’.

If it’s instinctive you don’t have to think about it. It’s more natural. It’s more effective.

**Vision Express**, part of the European Grand Vision group, with outlets across Europe, recently rebranded and redesigned its head office. It renamed it **‘The Support Centre’** as a signal that its role was to provide backing for its 300 retail

outlets, to work on their behalf; providing a service to them, rather than centralised control. The **‘Training Centre’** accordingly became the **‘Learning Centre’**. As the designer, **Mike Booth**, remarked – ‘Dogs get trained, people learn’.

Apart from having your logo loud and proud outside the company, what other steps can companies be taking to design the brand into the environment?





Retailers are adept at thinking about the customer journey through the store. How display can affect mood and propensity to buy, how sensory perception influences mood; how adjacencies work.

Designing business premises can take similar cues. As an example, some years ago **Toyota** carried out a radical review of its dealer premises across Europe.

Previously, service customers went through a different door (often round the back). They felt like second-class citizens

– and they had actually already spent money. Servicing took place out of sight in a workshop. The only clue that people had to what work had been carried out was the size of the bill they were presented with.

The redesign of the customer experience included bringing service into the sales areas, creating large viewing areas to watch work being carried out on the cars and taking salespeople off front of house.

Service satisfaction levels increased, the quality of work improved, profitability rose.

Like so many things in life, **design is in the detail**. It's how the personality and character of the brand is expressed in the furnishings you use to wall coverings, to the way the company mission is expressed to the sort of crockery people use.

How these design principles are applied through the premises says a great deal about a company. An immaculate management floor and chaotic furnishing elsewhere is indicative of what a company thinks about its staff- and through that, its

brand values. Different crockery for staff and visitors sends out different signals for both parties. It's hard to say you put people first when the accounts department are in a different building in the wrong end of town.

As a recent article in **Wired** put it, 'If you change the culture but don't change the space, the space will anchor behaviours in the past.'

To show they practice what they preach, the image on the left is of the Leitz Lounge in the Stuttgart office.

It's a relaxed democratic area for meeting business partners, but it is also available to staff for informal meetings.

The imagery on the wall is a reminder of the company's roots. Despite its recent focus on digital working as part of its New Product Development programme, Leitz doesn't forget where it came from. **Louis Leitz** and the Lever Arch File that he invented are prominent reminders of the company's heritage. The colour palette of the furnishings matches the company's corporate colours, with the use of green as a visible brand carrier.

**A word of caution – just as every company isn't Google so every company shouldn't aspire to look like Google.** In a 2016 article, Jeremy Myerson, founder-editor of **Design Week**, said that the 'office-as-playground' might be appropriate for **Google**, but other companies should be wary of simply copying their approach.

Instead, businesses should first determine their own organisational culture and then brief designers to create workspaces that support and encourage that culture to **create a brand culture and environmental fit**.

If, for example, the values you want to portray are about efficiency and productivity, then even small elements like storage need to be considered. The new storage range from Leitz for example, will embrace the challenge of storing day-to-day items in a functional environment that preserves the well designed workplace environment.

It is details like this that enable a company to not only function efficiently, but to demonstrably function efficiently.

The most important thing is for companies to be themselves. Sending out signals of relaxed informality is fine if you are an architectural practice. Less good if you specialise in criminal law. There's no point in designing offices on similar principles to **Apple** or **Facebook** if you are a company of accountants in Strasbourg.

Do you really want to visit a bank that looks like a fairground, or an insurance company that has slides and table tennis equipment in reception? The visual language will be all wrong. The behaviours that you will encourage will not sit with what you stand for.

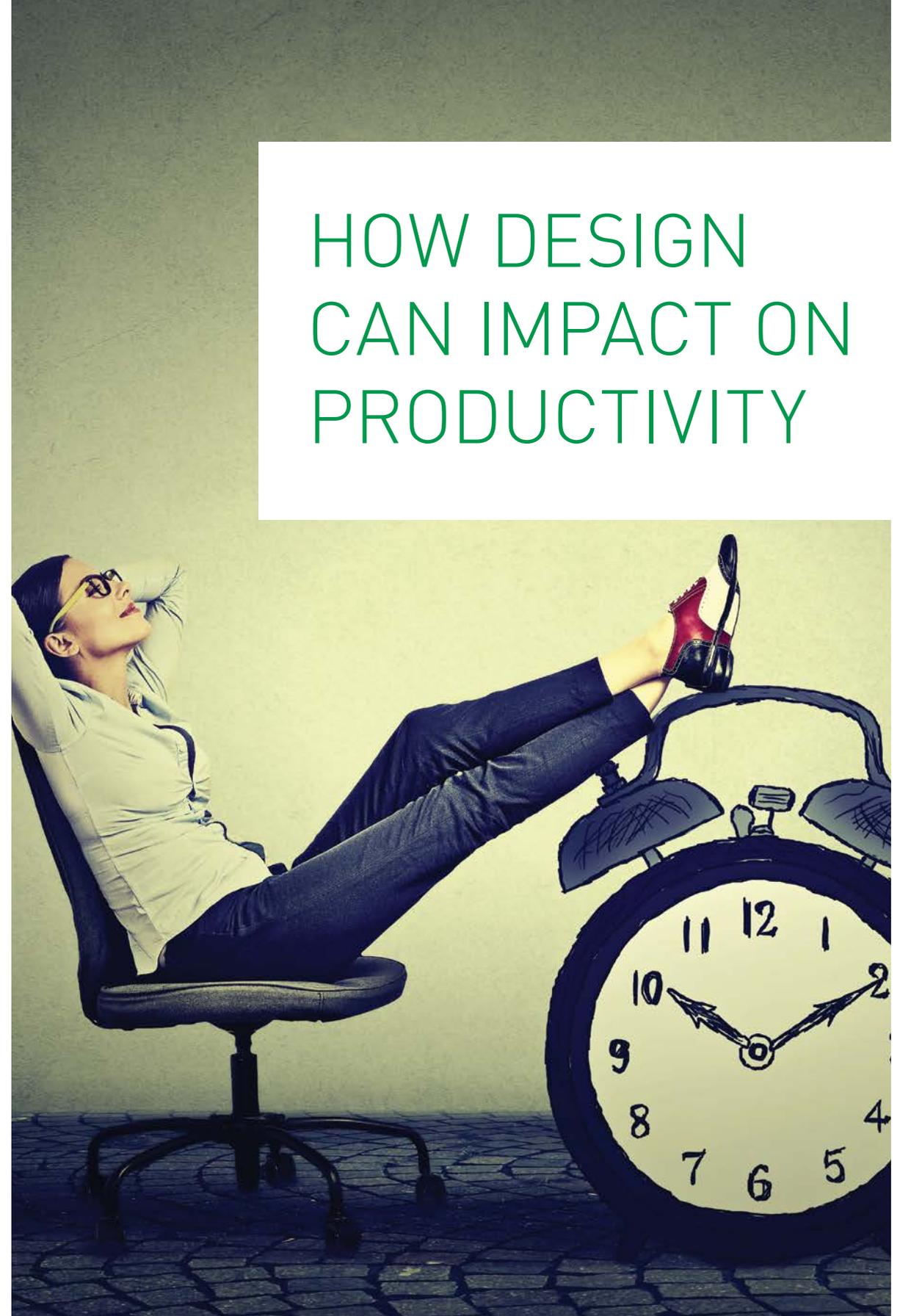
In short, you will be a fake, and there's **nothing worse than a fake brand.**

The best workplace design frames behaviour, and behaviour communicates values, either explicitly or more likely implicitly. To avoid being, or appearing, fake, a design process needs to include all of the often mundane aspects, down to the last detail. ■

#### Summary:

Design and particularly the design of company premises and its equipment plays a critical role in transmitting company and brand values towards its customers, employees and business partners. We cannot work towards positive change without adapting our physical space to reflect the values we stand for.

# HOW DESIGN CAN IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY



## HOW DESIGN CAN IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY



**'Time and motion' studies** were first introduced in factories and the discipline was translated into offices in the early 20th Century. Systems were implemented to increase measurable productivity.

But as office work has become less repetitive and clerical and more based around the implementation of knowledge and creativity this old approach has become irrelevant.

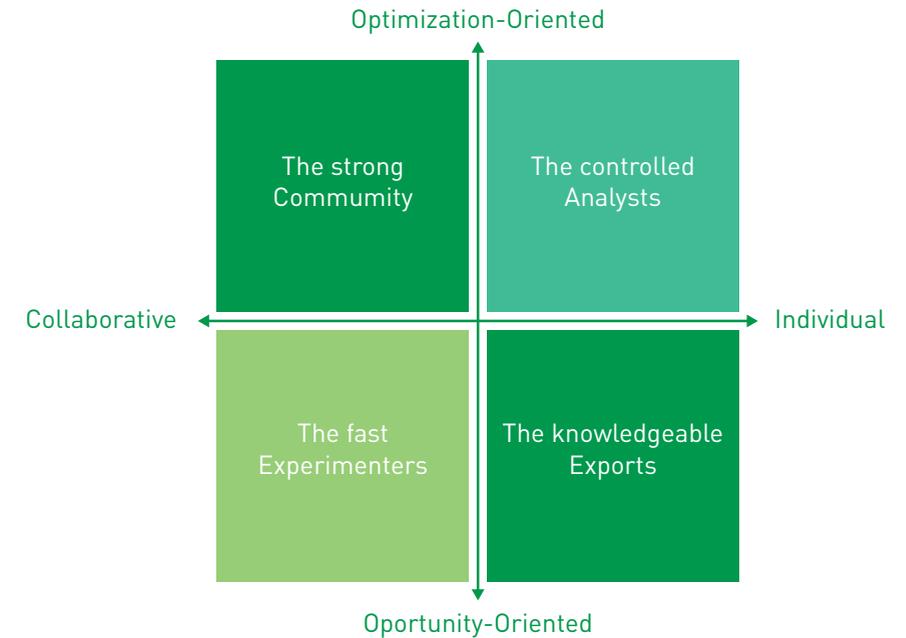
Design in modern offices is influenced by the psychology of the workplace and the ways in which fulfilled people work more productively, leading to a company/person win-win.

Environmental psychologists and behavioural economists are increasingly called on to advise on how design affects mood and performance or where companies wish to influence actions without overtly signalling them.

There is empirical evidence that shows that more involved people feel in the design and layout of their workspace, the better. A study by **Exeter University**, led by **Dr Craig Knight**, produced results that consistently showed that the more control people had over their office spaces, the happier and more motivated they were in their jobs.

## Design Culture Map

4 different cultural styles following different value systems



Source: Ubercreative

They felt physically more comfortable at work, identified more with their employers, and felt more positive about their jobs in general.

So workplace design may have to tread a fine line between projecting a corporate, branded feel and image and allowing people working there the flexibility to create their own mini-zones, without undermining the integrity of the overall design.

In the study for our White Paper, **'Work is Where You Are'** we asked workers to self-classify according to the characteristics of their working style. **53%** said they are mainly based at their own desk when they

work (Pillars); **27%** move around the office a lot (Roamers); **11%** make frequent trips outside the office (Explorers) and **8%** are rarely in the office at all (Pioneers).

Designers find this sort of segmentation useful in creating spaces that meet people's needs and make their working life easier and more fulfilling.

Many are a variation on a model first put forward by **Quinn and Rohrburgh** in the 1980s, who identified four types of company culture – collaborate, create, control and compete. Designers interpret this in different ways – such as the one from **Ubercreative** above.

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**“Creative” is a term that isn’t immediately associated with every type of business. But in a fiercely competitive world, new ideas are the lifeblood of any organisation.**

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Among the key issues for modern businesses are creativity, productivity and contentment. Arguably these are closely interlinked.

“Creative” is a term that isn’t immediately associated with every type of business. But in a fiercely competitive world, new ideas are the lifeblood of any organisation.

Designing spaces for creativity, productivity and contentment can take a number of forms.

There is a large body of research that shows that collaborative, cross-functional teams are best for problem solving and innovation.

Simply having the space for these teams to get together informally is a challenge for many companies. But there are many others that have empty space, or space that is ill suited to more discursive thinking.

More thought in design is going into creating internal connectivity, with areas flowing into each other, which reflect the breakdown in departmental silos.

**Gensler’s ‘2016 Workplace Survey’** found that companies identified by employees as innovative were five times more likely than less innovative companies to have space that accommodates collaboration.



A 2014 study in the Harvard Business Review, **‘Workspaces that move people’** showed that offices designed to allow mingling between people from different functions raise levels of innovation. Proximity and structures that encourage physical “accidental encounters” benefit outputs by creating a sense of serendipity – as well as reducing the impression of routine.

People are often multi-tasking, working in ad hoc project teams, rather than a linear job in a fixed place. Some will want to feel part of a defined group, experience an esprit de corps. Others will want dedicated, individual space for deep thinking and concentration. Or indeed, will want a combination of the two.

As a result, office design will have to create environments that break down generational barriers and encourage people to work together for a more collaborative output.

Workspaces of the future will provide a range of environments and spaces that both respond to people’s needs (conscious and unconscious) and “nudge” people into behaviours that companies value or wish to promote.

Designing in quiet zones (like in libraries or trains – but without the angry “shushing”) gives people more options and variety and is a silent signal to whether someone is open to discussion.

**3M** recently opened a new design centre which comprises open plan space with zones for meetings, quiet rooms, communal dining, interconnected to ‘foster creative collaboration’.

Where space is at a premium, fixed structures can be unaffordable – both financially and practically.

Innovations in this area include **modular acoustic panels**, like the ones designed by **Layer** that are freestanding, clip together and can be easily expanded and moved. ■

### Summary:

Design has facilitated the breakdown of traditional ideas of “work spaces” and created a new idea of a flowing workplace that involves all aspects and personalities of a company, ultimately increasing and promoting productivity.

## DESIGN AND WELL-BEING IN THE OFFICE

Well-being is increasingly a factor in the workplace and is closely linked to productivity.

Ergonomics, air quality, temperature control and lighting are foundations of the Maslowian hierarchy of needs, but have often been neglected at an individual level in past office designs.

While the office of the past offered a one size fits all approach, modern office design is now factoring in the possibility for people to tailor their environments to their own needs – or simply recognising the specific requirements of the workforce.

Women are roughly half the workforce in most office-centric companies. But for years they have had to fit in with a masculine oriented world.

For example, women feel the cold more than men. A study by the **University of Maastricht** shows that **an average woman generates 35% less heat than a man and feels comfortable in a temperature up to three degrees C. higher than he does.** So having a one temperature warms all approach to office heating doesn't make sense.

And as the Western world increasingly becomes wider and heavier, the requirements of the less mobile – not to mention, disabled – will become increasingly a factor within office design.

We are seeing the advent of intelligent spaces and intelligent equipment, designed around individual needs. At a macro level these are Building Management Systems (BMS), which a

few years ago were limited to turning the heating off at 5pm, so anyone working late felt doubly disadvantaged.

Contrast this with the new **Agnelli** building in Turin designed in 2016, which uses Internet-of-Things (IoT) sensors to continually monitor room occupancy levels, temperature and CO2 concentration, and using this information, the (BMS) responds dynamically, adjusting lighting, heating and air-conditioning.

Individuals are able to set their preferred temperature via a smartphone app, resulting in everyone having what the architect **Carlo Ratti** describes as their own 'thermal bubble' that follows them around the building, resulting in higher personal comfort and a projected 40% saving in energy costs.

Too often we think of innovation in terms of large scale, expensive equipment and the radical overhaul of office layout and design. But as in so many aspects of life, the smaller detail is important – such as what many people think of as basic office equipment.

Specialist branded manufacturers in most industries, such as Leitz, spend heavily on Research & Development to address many of the issues outlined earlier.

They use ethnographic research techniques to help refine design. They'll study the product in use. They won't just ask people what they think, they'll observe and study how products are used.

## DESIGN AND WELL-BEING IN THE OFFICE




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**'User-centred design optimises the product around how users want, need or can use the product. Learning about user mind-sets is mandatory to understanding this.'**

Nina Saller

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They think of more than “the average person” when it comes to identifying target audience needs and segment according to different requirements.

They take advantage of rapid prototyping to create test products and evaluate them in the real world with a test bed of users.

Many studies have identified the importance of lighting on well-being in the office. Getting natural light and fresh air are some of the hidden benefits in work on the move.

**'Lighting for People'**, a research paper produced as part of the European Union's programme for research and technological development, collected a wealth of research to demonstrate just how important lighting is on human health and wellbeing. Better workplace lighting (both natural daylight and artificial light) has been linked to a reduction in absenteeism in office environments.

The **Leitz Style Smart LED Desk Lamp** allows individual workers to personalise the light settings of their immediate office space, tailored to time of day, other ambient lighting or working mood, controlled by the App or Bluetooth.

As office design becomes more streamlined and minimalist there are hidden risks. What might seem like clutter that detracts from the overall design might actually be helping people feel better about themselves and their work environment.

Take plants, for example. A study in the **Journal of Experimental Psychology** recently compared the impact of the trend to lean offices on subjective perceptions of air quality, concentration, and workplace satisfaction as well as objective measures of productivity and showed that all increased when offices were by, or near, green areas. This was a feature of many offices in the past, but has often been discarded for apparently adding visual clutter.

These findings are endorsed by the **Exeter University** study cited earlier – **people in 'enriched spaces'** (plants, pictures), **were 17% more productive than those in 'lean spaces'** (bare and functional). Those in 'empowered spaces' – where people were allowed to design their own spaces, were **32%** more productive.

In a world where, according to **Gallup's 'State of the Global Workplace'** survey, **only 13% of employees reported feeling engaged in their jobs**, there is clearly a lot of room for improvement.

Design is one of the fundamental expressions of a brand – not simply the superficial image a company wants to project, but what it believes in, what's important to it – and crucially what is important to its customers.

To show that for every trend there is a counter-trend, **Fountown** is a new co-working space concept that aims to meet this opportunity, bringing the outdoors inside, including making plants a central part of the design theme. ■

#### Summary:

Design has pinpointed the aspects of an office environment that can help make people happier and more satisfied at work. For example, designing nature into a business space has changed the way people experience their surroundings while at work.

## DESIGN AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT EFFICIENCIES

Search on **Google** and you'll find thousands of articles devoted to the efficiencies to be found in the use of digital equipment and communication, but little in comparison about the cost to companies of the inefficiencies associated with the use of day-to-day equipment found on the average desk.

A major trend in electronic devices is multi-functionality. We notice it in innovations like **Microsoft's** decision to merge tablet and laptop with the **Surface Pro**. The benefits go beyond the obvious functional ones. There is also a personal wear and tear gain to a more flexible, portable product, where many of us are carrying four or more digital devices around.

Printers are now almost as intelligent as the devices they serve, capable of carrying out a range of tasks, adaptable, and remotely accessible.

The time, money and effort that goes into technological, electronic and digital devices contrasts with the comparative inertia in the stationery and office supplies market, where too many brands and retailers sell the same old stuff, year after year.

Often the products we use aren't just visually unappealing - they don't even work properly. How often do you pick up a stapler to find it's empty or the staples in the stationery cabinet don't fit it, or that two people can't get the same result from using it?

The solution to problems like this lies in thoughtful design, best based on close, real life understanding of how people use products.

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**Printers are now almost as intelligent as the devices they serve, capable of carrying out a range of tasks, adaptable, and remotely accessible.**

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**Leitz's NeXXt stapler series** are visually striking. They come in a range of colours that can be consistent with a company's corporate identity. But the real difference is hidden.

Its **Direct Impact Technology** addresses the main negative people find in using staplers – poor, unaligned stapling and as a result can guarantee perfect stapling every time. You'd have to dismantle the stapler to see how it works. But it is a simple solution derived from the simple observation that many (**over 60%**) of us pick up a stapler and use it in our hand and not on a desktop as most are designed to be. This simple observation has led to an entirely new, if hidden, design that aligns the stapler regardless of its usage.



## DESIGN AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT EFFICIENCIES

Computers were initially used by enthusiasts and academics. They weren't designed to look attractive – because it didn't matter.

Glitches and crashes and wires hanging out of the back were part of the appeal, or seen as the price to be paid for mastering technology (a bit like the way owners of classic cars expect to spend their time carrying out repairs or standing by the roadside waiting for assistance). The chaotic working of technology is fundamental to the plot, the suspense and the enjoyment of '**Back to the Future**', for example, where anything that can go wrong, at some stage does.

But while we enjoy the character of "Doc", few of us would want to work in a company he ran, or would put up with the knife-edge workings of his technology.

Now we have an expectation that technology won't just work, it will work intuitively and look good while it's doing so. Would we tolerate a phone that didn't work half of the time? Or a keyboard that stuck periodically? They'd be in the bin the same day.

**The average office worker in the USA and Europe still uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper every year.**

Yet with items that cost a fraction of electronic equipment and are far more easily disposable, we just make do. Or if we do replace it, it's often with a randomly selected substitute.

We will slave for hours over a presentation, getting the visuals just right, editing the words down to make our point succinctly and memorably. And then stand up and fumble with the keyboard of a laptop, rather than using a digital handheld controller, which if we'd thought about it, we could also have dropped into our bag or pocket before heading out. Impressively organised and confidently in control. Or not.

In a business world where personal impression is so important, it's strange how we obsess in one area and ignore another.

Despite the claims of Silicon Valley et al., the paperless office is still a distant prospect for the vast majority of businesses. While the use of paper in offices is undoubtedly falling, it is still a huge market. Although decline will continue, there is a long way to go. Ironically, many digital innovations like mobile printing apps are actually adding to consumption for some of us.



The **Paperless Project** reports that the average office worker in the USA and Europe still uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper every year.

It costs about \$25,000 to fill a four-drawer filing cabinet and over \$2,100 per year to maintain it according to research by **Gartner Group, Coopers & Lybrand** and **Ernst & Young**.

The average office spends \$20 in labour costs to file each document, \$120 in labour costs searching for each misfiled document, loses one out of every 20 documents and spends 25 hours recreating each lost document according to **PwC**.

Shouldn't we therefore bring the same demands we make on phones and laptops to hole punches, to letter trays, to file dividers, to laminators?

Paper management is hugely important, but companies don't seem to bother about it much as they should do. Office designers assume that paper is dead (it clearly isn't) and make little allowances for its continuing use. ■

#### **Summary:**

Office supplies shouldn't just be seen as a functional accessory; they help to portray a company's identity and work ethic. But more importantly, they need to work. Its no coincidence that quality of design brings out quality of performance.

## EQUIPMENT DESIGN AND COST BENEFIT

Total Cost of Ownership is a familiar term when we look at high value goods, like a car. We don't just think about the price on the windscreen, we also consider insurance, fuel consumption, reliability, servicing and repair costs.

The global predominance of **Mercedes** in taxis isn't just because drivers want their customers to feel special. And it certainly isn't down to the upfront cost. Its because of legendary reliability and durability (there are examples of some with over 1,000,000 kilometres on the clock), which impact on the lifetime value.

And no one recognises this more than the drivers. As one taxi driving blogger put it, 'In all honesty, taxi drivers have probably done more for the reputation of Mercedes-Benz than all TV commercials put together'.

Alternatively, something like LED vs. halogen lights, where the disparity between up front costs is offset over time by longevity and energy consumption.

If we took this thinking to fundamental office equipment, we would be surprised

at the consequences. Leitz commissioned research through **Vocatus**, a pan European consultancy to look at the actual cost of ownership of everyday office items among some major companies like **Bosch** and **IBM**, together with laboratory torture tests of products to simulate lifetime usage.

The results were startling. Over the course of a year, the average stapler is being used 3,000 times, the average hole punch 2,000 times, the average Lever Arch File 2,500 times.

Failure rates of reseller's own brand products (jamming, breakage, paper mangled etc.), compared to Leitz were double for staplers and Lever Arch Files, triple for hole punches, and a staggering six fold for laminators.

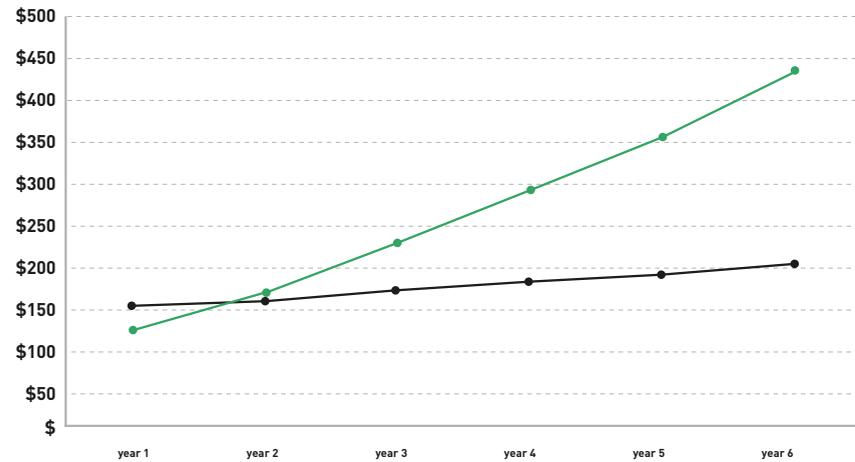
Translated into money (time spent re-doing, spoiled materials etc.), the lifetime costs of ownership of the own label stapler, hole punch and LAF, over Leitz, were €197, €122 and €146 respectively in terms of person time, materials, replacement costs etc.

## EQUIPMENT DESIGN AND COST BENEFIT



## LED vs Halogen Downlight

12 hrs use per day



Source: Lumitex Limited

—●— 50W Halogen

—●— Dazzled 9W LED

When seen in the context of a unit cost, the multiplier effect is enormous. Suddenly you're not buying a cheap €5 stapler – you're buying a €200 stapler. You just don't realise it.

There's an old saying – **'You're not rich enough to afford cheap things'**.

In a post recessionary world where every company is counting the cost, there's a lesson here for all of us.

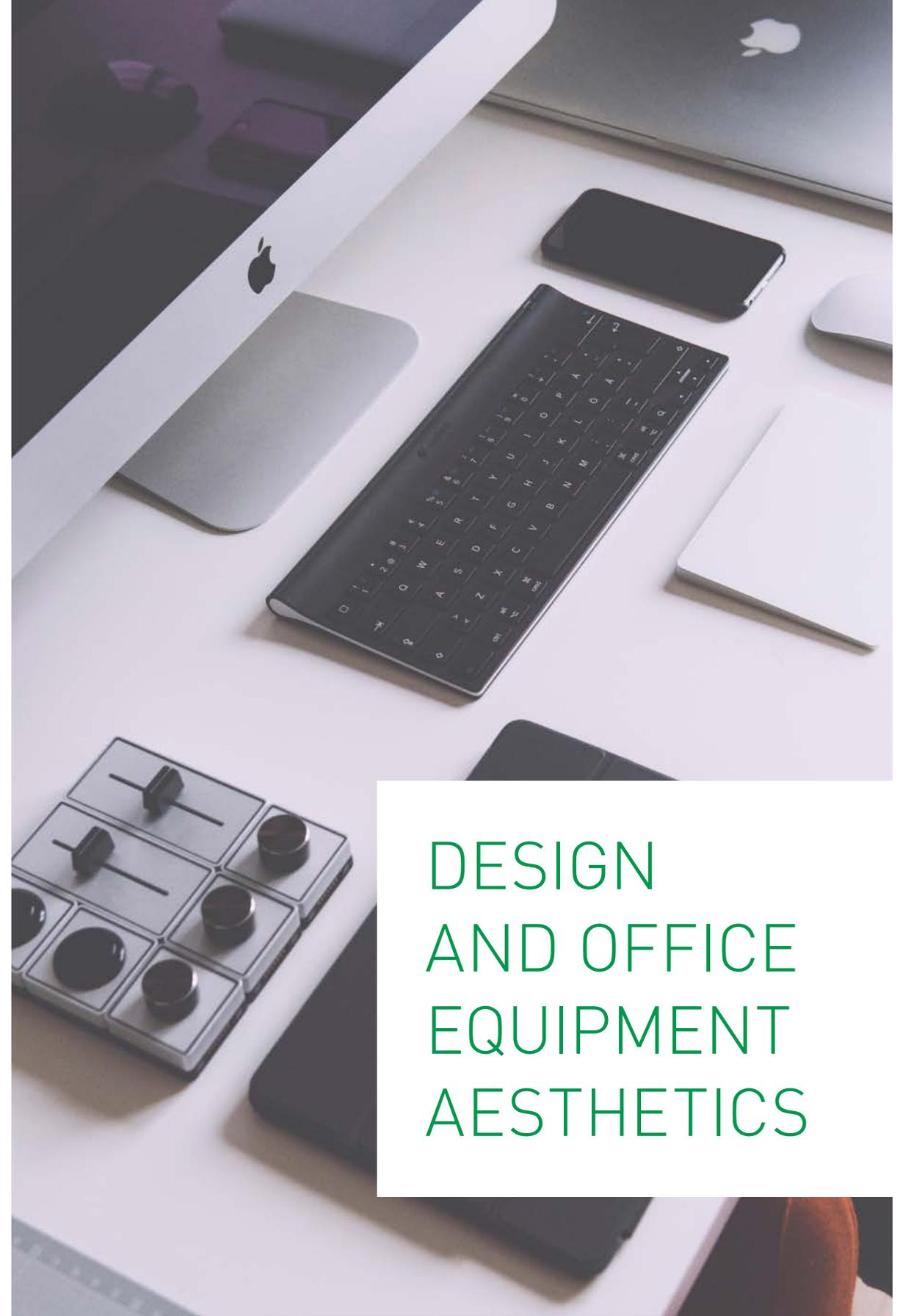
One issue here is that most people tend to equate design with surface aesthetics only. This is an important part of the story, but only part of it.

Just as the design elements of an office layout can be invisible (we subconsciously absorb brand signals, rather than consciously recognise and log everything we see), so in industrial design there's a lot of iceberg under the water line.

The exterior of even a humble stapler can hide precision engineering. The reasons why a branded product like Leitz outperforms own label are quite simple – superior quality of materials and greater mechanical design sophistication. ■

### Summary:

New technology, new opportunities, and new ways of designing have enabled companies to make products that are better than ever before. When you buy a new piece of office equipment from a company like Leitz, you aren't just investing in something that looks stylish, but something that will also keep functioning perfectly and save you money in the long term.



DESIGN  
AND OFFICE  
EQUIPMENT  
AESTHETICS

## DESIGN AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT AESTHETICS

It is a rare discussion on office equipment design that has gone on for more than five minutes without mentioning **Apple**.

**Apple** is no longer as newsworthy as it was five or 10 years ago. Arguably other companies like Samsung are making products with a technical edge.

### So why does the conversation always lead back to Apple?

It's almost certainly because they have achieved a blend of form and function which is distinctive and adds pleasure to ownership and use.

From the box the equipment comes in, with the satisfying sound of air release on opening for the first time, there is a promise of attention to detail.

And a design language that is instantly recognisable – through the product, through the use of colour (or not), through its snug fit in its packaging, to where and how it is sold, to the advertising style (which is relentlessly product oriented).

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### People assess your competence and trustworthiness in a quarter of a second based solely on how you look.

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Yet when we consider many offices, including those where large sums have been spent on architecture or refurbishment, we often find this attention to detail lacking.



We talked earlier about designing the brand into the workplace. It is noteworthy how often this stops at the use of a colour palette on the walls and the company mission and motivational phrases to exhort employees to live its values. Look around the average office (they still exist and outnumber the multinational brand houses hundreds of times over) and a different story emerges.

It's incredible how we cheerfully replace expensive digital machinery when it's a couple of years old and no longer apparently fit for purpose, while turning a blind eye to the items that we see every day.

Filing cabinets (where they still exist) are often a uniform, industrial grey, with battered dividers that slide to the bottom on opening.

Files on shelves can be a mismatched collection of forms and colours, with stickers on top of stickers, denoting their history.

Frequently, like geological strata, they are a visual record of how the company has evolved over time – pre and post merger

perhaps, with no attempt to create a sense of visual organisation or pleasure.

Many companies don't appear to think about building colour co-ordination into desktop materials like staples or hole punches. If your corporate colours are blue and yellow, why choose to have a random collection of materials scattered around, personalized in **Tipp-Ex** with the name of an owner who left years ago?

Appearance is an intangible. But it's an important intangible. At a personal level, whether we like it or not, people make judgments about us, based on our appearance. According to 2011 research by **Harvard Medical School**, people assess your competence and trustworthiness in a quarter of a second based solely on how you look.

Some aspects of this we can't do anything about. But personal organisation is something that is within everyone's control. **Tom Peters** wrote his influential piece, '**The Brand Called You**' nearly 20 years ago in 1997 – 'Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the

business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You'.

Branding lies in consistency of delivery, of seamless presentation, whether through the company or through individuals.

It's about investing a fraction of the money spent on IT on equipment that complements it – proper desktop chargers, multi-functional and portable, rather than an easily forgotten wire plugged into the wall in the corner of the conference room. Or worse, on the floor, so your people are scrabbling around on their hands and knees.

It's expressed via the stationery that you use. Do you pull out a battered notebook that a child would take to school, or a colour co-ordinated, more premium book that suggests that the thoughts you are capturing are actually worth something?

It's expressed through your cases and luggage. Many are designed to protect a laptop – but everything else can end up in a random mess if the case isn't designed to allow easy organisation and rapid access to the rest of the equipment you carry. ■

### Summary:

The design and quality of the tools and accessories that we use contribute hugely to the impression they give to the world, whether that be a person or an organisation. Someone who wants to express efficiency, quality, and style must select the right products to help them say that. Premium office equipment which has been designed to function well, and not just look good on your desk, can make all the difference.

## THE COMMERCIAL BENEFITS OF INNOVATIVE DESIGN

### THE COMMERCIAL BENEFITS OF INNOVATIVE DESIGN

Design and desire go hand in hand. Few things are deliberately designed to be ugly, unless they are making a deliberate counter-cultural statement or need to be associated with risk and danger. (Packaging of poisonous materials is rarely attractive).

Many innovative products also make visual design statements to signal functionality. No one wants complex equipment that goes wrong (although that doesn't stop us from buying it). But design cues allow us to judge performance at a glance. **The Leitz iLam range** isn't just sleek looking, the functionality of the design means that it looks what it is – simple and fool proof to use.

Consider also **Nest**, which has a distinctive visual language and hides its technology underneath its skin. Interestingly the publicity for the launch of its security cameras focuses on appearance, rather than features.

You're not just paying for the innovative functionality, you're paying for the pleasure of the aesthetic effect – and of course a self-statement, whether as a company or an individual, about what you find appealing or valuable.

Appearances can be proverbially deceptive. But in design they can fulfil different purposes, some of which we process consciously – others we are not always aware of.

At a basic level, aesthetics can simply draw attention. How often do we come to a halt by a shop window, because something has metaphorically called out to us?

We can unconsciously decode the ergonomic benefits of design, drawn to things that our brains tell us will be easier to hold or use. Think of the way the design of the computer mouse has evolved over time.



Deep inside us, we still have the childlike instinct to reach out and touch things that we find compelling. Next time you are in a shop with expensive items note how many men have unconsciously put their hands behind their backs to stop them signalling commitment by reaching for something.

When product alternatives are similar in function and price, consumers will tend to prefer the one that appeals the most to them aesthetically. There is value in design. Literally.

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**'If a product is able to reach the point where it gets desired by users, commercial benefit springs up by itself. Design promotes products to reach this point by making it functional, understandable, aesthetically attractive and visible in overcrowded markets'.**

Wolf Leonhard

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A study in **The Journal of Product Innovation Management** compared new technology companies that put an emphasis on design in new service development and concluded that they 'Can expect to have a greater proportion of sales from new customers, be less dependent on a few large customers, be more successful in entering new markets, have a more favourable firm image, and enjoy higher turnover growth from existing customers and higher profits than comparable firms not using aesthetic design'.

Colour psychology is well-known. But of course we also use colour to signal belonging (think of tribal colours or football team shirts). And these preferences are constantly evolving.

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**'Colour & Material design is far more than styling or psychology. It is about using methods from research and analytics to make and define the objectively right statement within a highly emotional discipline. The right colour & material combination can increase a product's perceived value as well as position it within a different segment or making it attractive to a different target group. Think about a fiery red and carbon black computer mouse versus a pure white one with subtle metallic click wheel. Which one will look more like a high-performance gaming mouse?'**

Nina Saller

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Every year **Pantone**, the global authority on colour, announce their colour of the year. For 2016, it was an unprecedented two-tone - Rose Quartz and Serenity.

The rationale was set in the context of global uncertainty at a state, commercial and personal level: 'As consumers seek mindfulness and well-being as an antidote to modern day stresses, welcoming colours that psychologically fulfil our yearning for reassurance and security are becoming more prominent'.

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**'Joined together Rose Quartz and Serenity demonstrate an inherent balance between a warmer embracing rose tone and the cooler tranquil blue, reflecting connection and wellness as well as a soothing sense of order and peace'.**

Leatrice Eiseman, Executive Director,  
Pantone Colour Institute

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Late in 2016, **Pantone** revealed their top 10 colours for Spring 2017, which featured muted, natural, even earthy tones like Kale and Hazelnut.

Critics of commerce would describe this as a marketing ploy. An unashamed attempt to encourage people to buy things they don't need, based purely on surface appearance.

To some extent there is truth in this. As the **Design Council** recently admitted, 'The twentieth century marketing perspective of "making people want things" has transitioned to a twenty-first century approach of "making things people want", and design – with its focus on users – is the route through which brands will either succeed or fail'.

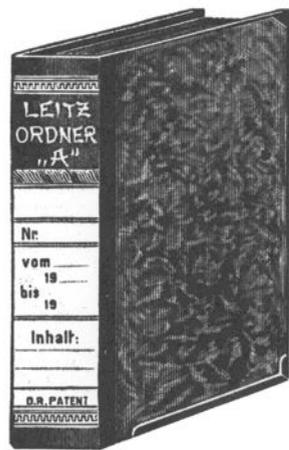
Great design is enduring. Remember **Rams** and his focus on classic, enduring design. The fundamental principles of the bicycle remain unchanged from the first same-sized wheel models.

But although a 19th century rider would find a modern track bicycle familiar in its fundamentals, the progress in materials, in lightness, in the efficiency of the brakes and gearing would make it seem like a different product.



The **Leitz Ordner or Lever Arch File** was first invented by Louis Leitz in 1896.

The principles remain the same today. But the enhancement through hard wearing materials, through innovations like the 180 degree opening mechanism allowing faster, easier filing of more paper, have transformed the original concept.



Innovative design is a driver of change in most markets. We respond emotionally to shapes, textures, colours that strike an emotional chord. Possession of beautiful things – whether an item of jewellery, a leather bound book or just a low price cosmetic bring us pleasure.

Design can bring a playful dimension to the most mundane tasks. The **'Henry'** vacuum cleaner is for heavy-duty tasks. If you saw one for the first time, you'd think it was a child's toy rather than an industrial cleaning tool. But the iconic face personalises it and adds an element of enjoyment to its use. **Mary Poppins**, who in the film memorably sang 'In every job that must be done there is an element of fun', would have approved.

Our quality expectations have risen. Design that is only skin deep is soon found out. We are motivated by things that perform, are fit for purpose, that **'does what it says on the tin'**, to borrow a well-known advertising phrase.

Just like vacuum cleaners, in the potentially utilitarian world of office equipment too, design plays a key role in influencing pleasure of ownership. It gives a new aspect to a category that many might otherwise consider dull.

The **Rapid K1** is the world's best selling plier. Essentially unchanged for 70 years, it is a design icon. Its retro look has enduring appeal - in a modest way, just as **Levi 501s** or vinyl records embody classic qualities.

Originally only in metallic steel finish, the product was given fresh impetus by a new colour range.

By introducing a range of new colours, the appeal of the range was transformed, bringing in new users, encouraging people to buy several shades, even to use as gifts.

Is this manipulation of the consumer? Or the creation of added value through aesthetics?

As human beings we like to think we are individual. But in reality we are drawn to the comfort of the known. We absorb fashion writing to understand what's hot; but also to know what's not. We want to make choices that are expressive, but only the most confident among us want to really stand out.

**We are what we eat. But we also are what we buy.**

In the business world we all think consciously about the appearance we project. For some it is a true reflection of their real selves, for others it can be a

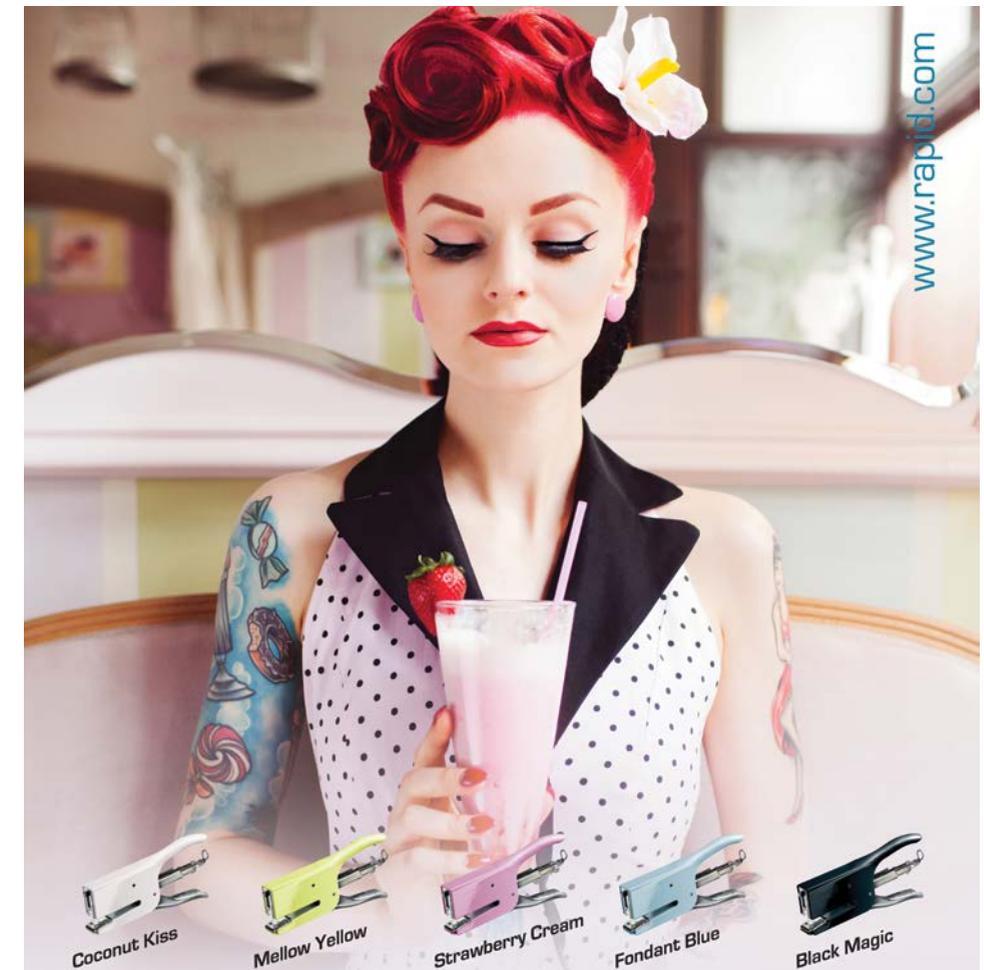
mask that we put on and off (although these tend to get found out in the end).

Being impressively organised and confidently in control is an essential characteristic for success, whether you are an executive assistant or a chief executive.

The tools we use – what they look like, the efficiency they deliver say a lot about us. Which is why brands, in every aspect of life, are important. They signal who we are, how we think. But above all they signal that we belong. ■

### Summary:

Consumers buy products they feel resonate with their personality and their values; they buy things that help them express who they are. Good product design is vital to achieving this and helps to enforce the idea that we have made the right choice. Consumers that feel happy and confident in their purchase are more likely to invest more. Therefore, good product design now plays an essential role in modern business.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR OFFICE EQUIPMENT RETAIL

In comparison with shiny electronic gadgetry, more apparently basic office equipment can seem a low interest category.

Where so much retail today is focused on celebrating products and inspiring customers, to a large extent many **Office Equipment** (OE) resellers struggle with this and some seem stuck in the dark ages with their retail beliefs and practices.

They are too often built on the belief that purchasing is driven by need, rather than want. The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy – would anyone really go to a typical OE retailer to browse, to be stimulated?

And this doesn't just apply to the physical stores. Online retailing in other categories has evolved beyond simply being a catalogue in digital form.

Automotive sites let you configure a new car. Décor sites allow you to envisage your home in different colours. Fashion sites give the facility to use virtual changing rooms. Travel sites are content rich and not just about the destinations.

It is clear that there is a lot of opportunity for Office Equipment retailers, and manufacturer brands, to take further advantage of the benefits that digital communications offers.

For example, to showcase products – not just the price and a brief descriptor, but focusing on innovative design and the technology that lies under the surface.

To elevate brands so that they are not seen as interchangeable commodities.

The lack of belief in creating an enjoyable retail experience, whether physical or virtual, creating desire to buy, rather than just need to buy, means the sector risks falling into the trap of commoditisation. And commoditised markets ultimately decline and die.

The sector often assumes that people will be driven by **price alone**, when the reality is that even procurement professionals have only a vague idea of relative price.

Research by Leitz into how people buy in this category produced some interesting findings, which go contrary to the received opinion.

Among office equipment buyers, **60%** didn't compare prices when making their most recent purchase.

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**The lack of belief in creating an enjoyable retail experience, whether physical or virtual, creating desire to buy, rather than just need to buy, means the sector risks falling into the trap of commoditisation.**

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR OFFICE EQUIPMENT RETAIL

When making product choices, previous satisfaction, long life, specific product attributes and convenience of use all rank above price

Meanwhile, not enough communication is directed to the areas that make a competitive difference – quality and performance for brands and service and responsiveness for the retailer.

It means that prices and margins are artificially lowered. This in turn will limit the amount of investment brand owners and retailers can make into new products and services. This ultimately will hurt the consumer who will not benefit from the newest and latest innovations.



Price focused suppliers can become blind to the fact that many consumers are looking for a reason to spend more, not less. They need to justify this with better design, materials, or the overall impression that a product makes. If suppliers can address those, often emotional, needs then a higher price is easily justified because the customer has been presented with something they want – and are prepared to pay for.

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**Good design is a brand differentiator. It adds value. It creates pleasure in ownership. Ultimately it impacts on personal productivity because on the whole, if we enjoy doing something we put more commitment and creativity into doing it.**

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A Leitz notebook costs around €20, depending on where you buy it from. A basic A4 notebook can be bought from around €1.

At one level they both do the same thing – provide paper to write on. And for many people, on many occasions this is enough.

But if you want to enjoy a more satisfying tactile experience, benefit from highly useful built in features, like pockets, a penholder, place markers and write on ivory 100gsm paper, the Leitz book is worth every extra cent.

Good design is a brand differentiator. It adds value. It creates pleasure in ownership. Ultimately it impacts on personal productivity because on the whole, if we enjoy doing something we put more commitment and creativity into doing it.

There seems to be limited belief in office equipment retailers in the power of brands. But it is the brands that invest in R&D, in design solutions. It is brands that take the time and spend the money to understand consumers – their needs, their wants, their desires – and also their disappointments and dissatisfactions.



Where other retailers have learned the value of presentation and creating desire to buy, the average OE retail experience is soulless and utilitarian.

The photograph above is from **La Boquería** market in Spain. It's a reasonable bet that no single item on display is anywhere near the cost of a notebook. But the merchandise is presented with pride. It is designed to catch the eye. It looks confident and professional.

These stalls are set up by people who have an eye for design when it comes to capturing the imaginations and the purses of their prospective customers.

So it isn't about cost, it's the thought that goes into it. It's a celebration of care, colour and choice. All presented with a personal touch.

Consider how **Legó** stand out from other toy brands by the bold use of colour in presentation. At one level, they're just plastic bricks costing a few cents each – if that. But with the power of good retail merchandising design, they become magical.



Maybe it's easy to make food look attractive. How about creating a sense of brand power in tools?

How much "theatre" exists in office equipment stores, in point of sale and product presentation? How much "wow" factor do we manage to communicate? Innovation drives desire – we should be looking to excite customers, not bore them.

Design can be used to cross sell. People have an increased aesthetic sense. They want things to apparently belong together.

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**We should be making things people want. And selling them in environments that will add to their lustre of appeal.**

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Companies spend thousands of Euros on interior design and technology, but often don't even consider the finishing touches, the essential details that complete the picture.

If a company's primary corporate colours are pink and grey, then their notebooks, their staplers, their filing trays should reflect this.

Would customers rather have desks that look neat, organised, with items that work immaculately and importantly, share a visual language or identity – or a mixture of scruffy out of date items that look as if they were collected in a random sweep of the stationery cupboard?

It is up to manufacturers and retailers to prompt these thoughts, to give a sense of coherence and completion.

Manufacturers and retailers need to seize the opportunity to elevate the products they produce and sell, recognise that they can be made higher interest, higher value and higher margin.

Good design is key to this. It is a point of competitive advantage. It is an investment with a ROI, not a cost to be pared back.

We should be making things people want. And selling them in environments that will add to their lustre of appeal.

The alternative is commoditisation, a race to the bottom and commercial oblivion. ■

### Summary:

Most office equipment retailers and manufactures do not sufficiently explore the commercial opportunities that well-designed products can provide. The belief that design does not matter and only price does is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Appreciating design more and exploring opportunities good design offers will restore and preserve value even in stagnant categories.





CONCLUSIONS:  
WHY DESIGN AT  
WORK MATTERS

## CONCLUSIONS: WHY DESIGN AT WORK MATTERS

Design is playing a huge role in the evolution of work and the workplace, although it is something we frequently take for granted, or don't consciously notice.

Design is everywhere around us. Every part of our made environment has been designed. And in the case of work, work places and work materials, constantly, (sometimes invisibly), evolving.

Design at work covers an increasingly large footprint. It begins with the traditional approach to the tools and materials we work with, both through breakthrough innovation – the never seen before - but also through optimising the technology that we already have, such as designing longer lasting batteries into Smartphones, creating multi-functional tools.

But design has evolved beyond the traditional areas into the environments we work in and even the work processes themselves. Not simply are they fit for purpose, but are they places where we feel a sense of belonging? How are tasks organised and allocated, how can work flow efficiently?

Even the very structures of companies, the ways they operate internally and interact with other organisations in their supply chain, with customers and consumers. Good design can, and should, influence all of these things.

Design is about solving problems – the more easily, efficiently and aesthetically pleasing, the better.

Businesses are increasingly design-oriented. The growth of the function of Chief Design Officer or its equivalent is testament to this.

Understanding the customer, their needs (whether known to them or not), is central to design development. Against this background, forward-looking companies are using the principles of design to guide how they are structured and how they approach their markets.

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**Design is everywhere around us.  
Every part of our made environment  
has been designed.**

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Design is one of the fundamental expressions of a brand – not simply the superficial image a company wants to project, but what it believes in, what's important to it – and crucially what is important to its customers.

Having a “joined-up” brand means that values and outward presentation need to be in alignment.

The psychology of the workplace is taking on increased significance, a focus on creativity, productivity and contentment.

Design in the workplace – from overall layout, dedicated spaces, to adjacencies to materials, to equipment, to the use of colour, are internal expressions of the brand, but also an influence on the people who work there.

It will shape, positively or negatively, the way they work. How they interact with colleagues, how effective they are, how comfortable they are, how happy they are.

It will affect how much they want to work in the company, even whether they want to come to the office at all.

Technology and design are coming together to provide environments, which are more personalised. This can be for privacy, for health and well-being or for individual preferences and convenience.

Designers and manufacturers like Leitz are making increased use of consumer insight and ethnographic research techniques.

They take advantage of rapid prototyping to swiftly and cost effectively evaluate impact and performance. They go beyond the needs of the “average person” to consider individual needs.

In the area of fundamental office equipment there is a lot of catching up to do in the average company. Inefficiencies and poor functionality aren't just tolerated, they are taken for granted. The average office has state of the art IT equipment and non-functioning staplers and broken filing trays.

We should be bringing the same demands that we make on phones and laptops to hole punches and laminators.

But we rarely do. And this is a mistake because it can often translate directly into productivity and the bottom line.



Concepts such as **Total Cost of Ownership** (TCO) are fundamentals in many aspects of procurement, but ignored in basic office equipment. Research by Leitz showed significant performance differences between retailer own and price fighter products, which significantly offset the premium paid at point of purchase. And this ignores other benefits such as the projection of a professional image through co-ordinated, high quality equipment and materials.

We often think of design in terms of aesthetics at the expense of other attributes. But aesthetics are important in their own right and shouldn't be dismissed, even in the work environment as a frivolous non-essential.

There is pleasure and pride in ownership. We unconsciously decode the ergonomic and functional benefits of design, drawn to things that our brains tell us will be easier, more satisfying, to hold or use.

When product alternatives are similar in function and price, consumers will prefer the one that appeals the most to them aesthetically. This is the added value of design.

Design can be enduring or constantly evolving. There are many examples across markets of products whose essence has remained unchanged over time, but which are constantly, often imperceptibly updated and enhanced.

These new refinements – whether the many variants that exist of the classic **Levis 501** or the introduction of contemporary colour options in staples and pliers, allow us to express individuality, or simply express our deep rooted desire for novelty.

In concluding this study of design and its impact on our working lives it is clear that **there is still considerable opportunity for manufacturers and retailers in office equipment.** However it is likely that not all suppliers will make the necessary steps to embrace these opportunities.

To help those who are willing, we have summarised our findings in the following six principles of a design centered approach to the Office Equipment market:

**To realise** that a category is only low interest if we are prepared to let it become so.

**To recognise** that the market is not so very different to others where there is a desire for quality, for performance, for personalisation, for brands that stand for something.

**To avoid** assuming that people will only buy on price when the reality is that other attributes are often far more important and that purchasing can be driven by wants rather than need.

**To talk** about and demonstrate the thought and design detail which goes into brands, which are constantly innovating and enhancing their offer.

**To use** the principles which are second nature to retailers in many other categories, whether in physical stores or online, to create desire, to cross-sell and upsell.

**To elevate** the brands that they sell and recognise that they can be made higher interest, higher value and higher margin.

And by doing this **everyone wins** – the retailer, the manufacturer and the consumer. ■

## CONTRIBUTORS:



### Andrew Crosthwaite

Andrew has spent nearly 40 years as a brand strategy specialist. He is a former Head of Planning at Euro RSCG London and prior to joining BLAC as planning director, ran the Core Values consultancy, working with clients as diverse as Toyota, Unilever, The Swedish Forestries Industries Federation, Associated Newspapers and Her Majesty's Government. He has written papers and delivered presentations internationally on the Futures of Retail, The Office, Brands, and Television including a keynote speech at the annual conference of the Colour Marketing Group. As a consumer specialist, much of his work consists of generating insight into brands and communication, with design often an area of focus. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising and also of the Royal Society of Arts.



### Nina Saller

Nina is a specialist regarding Futurology, CMF (Colour, Materials, Finish) and Design Research with over 18 years of experience as a consultant in various fields such as industrial design, interior, fashion, beauty and food. Her focus lies on the creation of multisensory user experience by translating human needs and emotions into innovative design concepts, which are both meaningful and fun in the long term. Amongst other things, this also involves lectures, seminars, keynote speaking and both journalistic and academic research into trends and multisensory user experience. Besides Esselte-Leitz, the client list of Nina Saller includes other international companies including Nestle, Siemens, LG, Airbus, Samsung, Tchibo, Huawei and Pantone.



### Wolf Leonhardt

Together with Stefan Lippert, Wolf Leonhardt has been leading ipdd, an innovative design company, for over nine years and has the experience of countless design projects spanning more than 16 years. At ipdd they benefit from the experience of successfully launching more than 1000 products on the market. In addition to their work with Esselte Leitz, ipdd designs products across all industries with a diverse range of clients such as Liebherr, Playmobil, Bosch, Thule, Staedtler, Dürr, Lamy etc. These clients, amongst others, demonstrate Wolf's focus on the customer and all of his work is proof of the innovation and design that is vital to his field. He dedicates his time and his working life to re-energising products and making them not only individual, but also user-friendly. Each project culminates in brand-specific product features being effortlessly showcased. Wolf is helping to shape the future of daily business.

Leitz provides top quality products to help professionals organise their work in any environment. Renowned industry-wide as an innovative brand with German heritage and quality standards, Leitz is leading the transition to the future of work.

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