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Listen up

Trend setters

Ten years on

Fully charged

Plug and play

Fork handles

Streets ahead



Materials | Trends twenty-ten | Prototyping | Cutlery | Designer's tools



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What has been the biggest trend/s in the last decade? There is no doubt that the most significant megatrend that has had the most profound impact on the way we live our lives would be the information age or digital age. It has transformed the world around us and given us the ability as individuals to transfer information freely with instant access to knowledge that would have been difficult or near impossible to find previously. It has affected everything from the way we do business to the way we interact with each other to the way we buy groceries, overtaking traditional bonds and relationships.

What do you think are the main drivers that are currently impacting on future trends? Over recent years we have witnessed turbulent times. Fear, uncertainty and doubt characterises our lives. Recession, global unrest, disaster and tension means we now face new challenges and need reassurance and comforting. With growing anti-globalization sentiment and the growing threat of climate change, there is an increased pressure on companies to be good corporate and social citizens.

Values like trust, integrity, gen_

erosity and transparency will pay a more important role in business and brand building as we move away from a capitalism society of corporations and institutions to individuals and communities. As described by Richard Seymour, co-founder of design agency SeymourPowell, "Us and them is very important in the future, whole corporations, whole brands are starting to migrate from them'ism to us'ism." The barrier between them and us is closing. CEO's are blogging on twitter, McDonalds has changed it's slogan from "We love to see you smile" to "i'm lovin' it" and rather than talking at customers, brands are engaging followers in conversation, encouraging participation and creating valuable content. Mass-marketing and globalization will give away to value-driven consumerism - a shift to conscious consumers buying into brands that support their lifestyle choices. Everything from sustainable, ethical, and organic products to supporting local brands and communities. This new order will drive new marketing and manufacturing strategies from the way we communicate to how we manufacture products.

We have all heard the saying that 'good design is good for business'. Do you agree? Have you noticed with your clients that they are seeing the benefit that good design can bring to their business and do you think that we will see more of this in the future? Design is good for business however, it all depends on how it is used and integrated into the business DNA. Quite often design and the benefits it can offer is misunderstood or badly implemented. Let's remind ourselves of the practitioners who shaped our world in the early 20th century at a time when all the disciplines were more fused, mathematics, science, art and technology. Practitioners often addressed big issues, social and economic problems and would move seamlessly between the disciplines in order to achieve their goals. This broader approach gave birth to thinkers and visionaries who were seeing the bigger picture and with an understanding that led to new things. Design today has become a tool of consumerism, become more focused and has led to the emergence of specialism among the disciplines e.g. Industrial design,

user interface design, packaging design, graphic design and many other specialist niches. So today we find designers working on much smaller aspects of the bigger picture, often in isolation and often lacking overview and vision. Consequently people today who buy design lack experience and knowledge of the true benefits design can offer the business. Unfortunately this misunderstanding has coloured peoples perception of design to stand for aesthetics, colour and fashion. Like many other designers we also face the same issues to change perceptions by challenging the briefs set by our partners and finding stories that can help better communicate an understanding of the true benefits that design can offer. Increasingly product and industrial design consultancies are providing their clients with the 'full package' from research, styling, engineering, branding, packaging, POS and so on. Will this be an ongoing trend and do you see the future of the traditional product design consultancy changing in the future?



The kMix project involved designing the complete product experience.

Youmeus experience and expertise originated in Industrial design however over recent years we have begun to approach design in a more 'holistic' way, working across disciplines. We believe that a broader approach enables us to achieve a coherent product story with maximum consistency. From product design to graphic design, branding and advertising, we believe that it's all the same - it's about communication. Our approach has allowed us to work on a diverse range of projects including Insights, Strategy & Vision for Virgin Atlantic Airways through to full NPD projects for Kenwood. kMix for Kenwood has been one our most complex and stretching projects to date for the UK manufactures of food preparation ap-

pliances. The multi-disciplined nature of the project and the diverse international team we interfaced with presented us with many challenges which we overcame to deliver a critically acclaimed product. We designed the complete product experience including the kMix identity, mixer product, packaging, exhibition stands and point of sale systems. The project encompassed vision & design where we were involved in helping Kenwood identify and build a new market segmentation, naming and brand positioning followed by an intensive product development programme to take the idea from concept to market. What design tools do you think will become more



prevalent in year to come? Over the past decade we've witnessed dramatic advances in CAD, CAM, CGI, and rapid prototyping technologies, more intuitive interfaces, speed, intelligence and affordability. We have also seen some of this technology making its way down to a consumer level such as IKEA's in store kitchen design system, Google's Sketchup software and online tools supporting Dell's mass customisation strategy. We should expect to see further developments and innovation in the coming years. CAD systems will utilise the Internet better giving designers and engineers access to shared information and the ability present their work over live 3D video conferencing systems. (No need to carry expensive workstations into your clients boardroom anymore). Flat computer monitors will be replaced or combined with 3D holographic displays allowing you to walk around your designs or view them to scale and context. Affordable 3D rapid prototyping printers will make their way in to most design studios alongside traditional printers. This will allow designers to interact and experi-

ment with their designs much earlier on in the product-development process; (much in the same way we used to work when we made mock-ups and models in the workshop). Rapid prototyping will become rapid manufacturing and could revolutionise traditional manufacturing, tooling and production processes as we know them. This alone could become a key driver of the mass customisation revolution with companies developing new products and services having unique configurations to fit demand. One day we may have our own rapid manufacturing devices at home so that we can create our own products of have the product delivered electronically from our favourite suppliers. Its not a far fetched scenario as we have already seen the printing press and photographic laboratory transferred to our homes in the form of desktop publishing and digital desktop printers. As computer hardware gets faster we should expect to see more real-time hardware rendering. This will give designers the ability to present their ideas live on screen rather than static images.