



Design Management

Managing Design Strategy, Process and Implementation

Kathryn Best

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Managing Design Strategy, Process and Implementation by Kathryn Best

An AVA Book
Published by AVA Publishing SA
Rue des Fontenailles 16
Case Postale
1000 Lausanne 6
Switzerland
Tel: +41 786 005 109
Email: enquiries@avabooks.ch

Distributed by Thames & Hudson (ex-North America)
181a High Holborn
London WC1V 7QX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 20 7845 5000
Fax: +44 20 7845 5055
Email: sales@thameshudson.co.uk
www.thamesandhudson.com

Distributed in the USA & Canada by:
Watson-Guptill Publications
770 Broadway
New York, New York 10003
Fax: +00 1 646 654 5487
Email: info@watsonguptill.com
www.watsonguptill.com

English Language Support Office
AVA Publishing (UK) Ltd.
Tel: +44 1903 204 455
Email: enquiries@avabooks.co.uk

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ISBN 2-940373-12-4 and 978-2-940373-12-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Design by Karen Wilks

Production and separations by AVA Book Production
Pte. Ltd., Singapore
Tel: +65 6334 8173
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Distributed by Thames & Hudson (ex-North America)
181a High Holborn
London WC1V 7QX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 20 7845 5000
Fax: +44 20 7845 5055
Email: sales@thameshudson.co.uk
www.thamesandhudson.com

Distributed in the USA & Canada by:
Watson-Guptill Publications
770 Broadway
New York, New York 10003
Fax: +00 1 646 654 5487
Email: info@watsonguptill.com
www.watsonguptill.com

English Language Support Office
AVA Publishing (UK) Ltd.
Tel: +44 1903 204 455
Email: enquiries@avabooks.co.uk

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PROLOGUE

Introduction

Design management is about the management of design.

In its most basic sense, design management is about managing design projects; projects paid for by a client, a business or an organisation, and carried out by a designer, a design team or a design consultancy. For some, this is where design management stops, but for others, it is more than just a form of project management. Design management as an approach has a myriad of other uses.

Design describes both the process of making things (designing), and the product of this process (a design). Design plays a key role in shaping the world and generating new products, systems and services in response to numerous market conditions and opportunities. According to a recent Design Council report, around one million people are currently employed in design-related activities in the UK alone.

Can design be used to add more value to business? What roles can design play in business? Designers are often labelled as 'creatives', but they are just as likely to employ analytical skills when faced with a problem. Similarly, managers are considered to be analytical individuals, but they are just as likely to adopt a creative approach when seeking a business solution. Designers and managers both exhibit the ability to be analytical and to be creative, but in different ways, using different tools, and with different outcomes. The stereotypes of designers and managers overly-simplifies the complexity of design management, and this book extends beyond these simple generalisations. Design is intrinsically linked to business, in a way that can both add and create value.

Beyond the superficialities of the style and aesthetics debate, and beyond the simplistic view of designers and managers, there are opportunities for individuals at various stages of their career, working in a wide range of organisations, and at different project stages, to promote and utilise the value of design. Design management is not a clearly defined vocation, career path or academic subject area; no two 'design managers' will have the same background, training or experience in how they got to the position of

being the decision-maker about the management of design and design projects. Design management is a leadership role, one that requires explaining, inspiring, persuading and demonstrating how design can positively contribute to an organisation in many different ways.

The aim of this book is to promote a clearer understanding of design's role in business and the importance of design as a way of creating value in an organisation. The book is a guide for students of design, design management, marketing, media communications and business studies, and for anyone involved in the management of design and creativity.

The book begins with a contextual overview of design management, which is followed by three 'parts', these fully explore the management of the design strategy, process and implementation respectively.

Part One: Managing the Design Strategy looks at the first stage of design management, where design projects and initiatives are **conceived**. The focus of this stage is on identifying and creating the conditions in which design projects can be proposed, commissioned and promoted. At this stage, design management engages design thinking in an organisation's strategy, identifying the opportunities for design, interpreting the needs of its customers, and looking at how design contributes to the whole business.

Once an organisation has made the decision to invoke a design strategy, design management deals with the establishment and promotion of it, securing the support and commitment of the stakeholders in the business, and planning for long-term growth – not just immediate and short-term gains.

Part One investigates the skills required in managing client relations and guiding design decisions, building relationships, and developing the necessary verbal communications skills to achieve the effective exchange of ideas and information.

This stage is about how those responsible for the management of design can **inspire** design thinking and projects.

Part Two: Managing the Design Process looks at the second stage of design management, where design projects and agendas are **developed**. The focus of this stage is on demonstrating how strategy can be made visible and tangible through design. At this point, design management is about how design can be used to craft the presence and experience of an organisation, and in doing so influence how the organisation and its brand are expressed and perceived. To help identify the management challenges that will be faced when initiating design projects, models from a range of design-related processes and disciplines are provided. Theoretical models can never provide an instant solution, as they are abstract representations of real-life situations, and no single model will fit all solutions. These models are intended as starting points from which to develop project-specific approaches, ones which

enable an organisation to explore competitive advantage through design.

Part Two investigates the skills that are required to effectively manage creative teams, facilitate the design process, lead designers, develop a culture of collaboration and develop solid visual communication skills in order to make thoughts and ideas presentable.

This stage is about how those responsible for the management of design can **lead** design agendas, projects and possibilities.

Part Three: Managing the Design Implementation looks at the stage of design management where design projects and outcomes are **delivered**. The focus of this stage is the process and practice of managing projects, including the decision-making involved in specifying design materials, working relationships and ethical responsibilities. Once a design project has been completed, the delivery of it can entail further stages of design management, such as developing design guidelines and manuals, the maintenance and evolution of the design, and translating design solutions for the global context. Evaluating the success of the design project allows positive feedback to inform and promote the effective use of design.

Part Three investigates the skills required when managing creative projects, such as leading and advocating design-project successes, developing good written communication skills and understanding the differences between the management and the leadership of design agendas.

This stage is about how those responsible for the management of design can **manage** design agendas, projects and possibilities.



Case-study Pages

There are two case studies in the Practice section of each part. The case studies are from leading companies and are live examples on the importance of design in business.

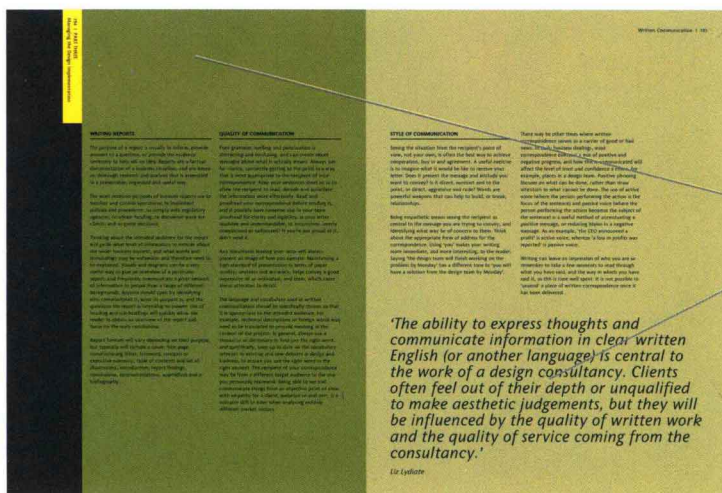
Image captions are flagged by the chapter colour.

Practice pages are identified by their black border.



Interview Pages

Within the practice section of each part there are two interviews with leading professionals responsible for the management of design.



Key-skills Pages

This section discusses the practical skills involved in design management.

Tinted pages align the section with the relevant part.

The use of quotations provides additional insight.

Context

The role of design, and its management, in business, society, culture and the environment has a rich and active history. This section of the book provides an introduction to some of the key debates and definitions of design management, and reasons behind their importance today. It also provides an overview of the background and origins of design management in the form of a timeline.

CONTEXT

What is Design Management?

There is no single, universally agreed definition of the term 'design management', just as there is no single agreed definition of 'design', or in fact of 'business'. When looking at the nature of 'design', the word itself is both a noun (an outcome), and a verb (an activity). The *outcome* of a design project can be seen in the products, services, interiors, buildings and software processes that we come into contact with daily. The management of these design projects is only one aspect of design management. The *activity* of designing is a user-centred, problem-solving process, which also needs to be managed and therefore is another facet of design management.

The term 'business', when used in the context of design and business, can become a container for all kinds of non-design activities, such as marketing, finance, strategic planning and operational activities.

In the area of design management a wide variety of perspectives exist, which reflect the rich array of individuals, professions and contexts involved, such as academia, the public or private sectors, business and industry, the design profession, and public or governmental bodies. Indeed, the lack of consensus on both the scope and substance of the design management discipline has hampered the development of reference material to support it. There are however, some knowledgeable attempts to provide agreed definitions for specific aspects of design and design management.

Topalian has stated that within an organisation, design management consists of managing all aspects of design at two different levels: the corporate level and the project level. Topalian also believes that 'design management development needs to broaden the participants' experience of design problems and the range of project and corporate circumstances within which they have to be solved' (2003).

Gorb has defined design management as 'the effective deployment by line managers of the design resource available to the organisation in the pursuance of its corporate objectives' (1990). This definition suggests that the subject is therefore directly concerned with the organisational place of

design, and with the identification of those design disciplines that are relevant to the resolution of key management issues, and what training managers need to use design effectively.

Hollins describes design management as 'the organisation of the processes for developing new products and services' (2002), and for Cooper and Press, being a design manager is about 'the response of individuals to the needs of their business and the contribution they can make to enable design to be used effectively' (1995).

As a job description, the design manager has the role of managing design. What exactly this entails will vary from organisation to organisation, and the person responsible for managing design might be called a 'brand manager', a 'project manager', a 'client-account handler', an 'account director', a 'design consultant' or an 'advertising planner'. The important aspects of managing design, irrespective of the job title, are about understanding the strategic goals of an organisation and how design can play a part, and effectively putting in place the ways and means, the tools and methods, the teams and planning requirements and the passion and enthusiasm, to achieve these goals as successful outcomes.

There is growing awareness within many organisations that design is a valuable means to achieve strategic goals and objectives. There is also an increasing desire to understand the design tools (the methods and ways of thinking that the design process brings), and the design planning and implementation, which effective project management of design brings. According to Ackoff, planning is 'anticipatory decision-making' (1981), and it is the design manager's responsibility to anticipate where design can contribute value, and how this can be realised.