Dear Reader,

The new year has started on a speedy and exciting note. We have various interesting relationship-building activities lined up for the coming few months. We will also be collaborating with names internationally to ensure our presence is felt now more than ever before in the overseas markets. The future looks promising.

With that observation, we spoke with one of the leading product design firms in India to lend us a perspective on how to make a product innovation successful. Catch Futuring Design's thoughts on leading a design-centric business. Further, read colour guru, Latika Khosla's views on why the right colour may sell your product faster than you will give it credit.

All this and much more about what Godrej Locking Solutions and Systems (GLSS) has been up to in the past quarter.

Stay blessed,

Colours are one of the senses that do not need a language in any part of the world. We react to a colour intuitively and instinctively. Carrying out a colour change for a brand’s product is a very exciting way to attract consumers. This is because it then immediately enhances and encapsulates the benefits that the manufacturers want to highlight with respect to it. Colours work for unique manufacturing, communication and marketing purposes.

It is important to underline the position a product will be taking. First, colour has a universal understanding and code; second, colour can be used to emphasise the product’s benefit, new change and new launch without undertaking extensive retooling. For example: a feminine or soft colour for a masculine or male-centred product will end up killing it.

One can also call attention to a product launch to bring out its new features or look. With respect to a product range, colours help make an impact of numbers. If a set of products’ features are the same, a sense of customisation and appeal is lend via different colours to different consumer groups. In the case of price points, a product can be coloured differently to create a brand hierarchy too. Thus, colour change can really propel a business.

You can also make alliances with your consumers through product colour to enhance it further. For example: colour for a cause, which could be a product being sold in a particular colour to support and create awareness about an illness.
The colour story abroad

In evolved markets, the integration of colour selection with marketing and branding dates back 30 to 40 years. For example, in the US, there would be regular cyclical colour trends with every season. But that has changed in the past few years, and now, colour trends are limited to two seasons a year—largely in terms of global fashion. Today, colour trends take place across industries and almost at the same time because the industries work together to serve the same customer.

Branding colour is a brand’s livery; it includes the logo, the brand’s personality, aspects such as the letterhead and indoor and outdoor branding opportunities—it is the core corporate colour of a brand. However, every vertical under the umbrella of a conglomerate that has various businesses and products under it, such as the Godrej group, will have a different positioning in the consumers’ minds.

Here, it does not mean that the logo colours are the product colours—a major difference that needs to be understood. The above concept does not mean that the logo or corporate colour be found in the myriad offerings of any multi-speciality leader. They have to focus on using colours that resonate with the needs of the consumer with an aim to enhance their lifestyles with every one of their products. The challenge is to align the product colour with the mental state of the target audience.

The Godrej product story

When we began working on a colour change for Cartini to move away from its former brand association, we saw that most global brands in this space were working with reds and oranges. We then decided not to adopt such warm and sharp colours and picked a colour called Global Teal for greater colour differentiation.

Teal has the royal quality of blue and the tenacious drive of green. Most of all, it denotes prestige but is still approachable. It is a colour with moisture and healing because we understand that these are the required visual qualities for cutting instruments. Today, with the help of emotional and rational palettes, colours have their inherent sophistication. The hues picked for the entire range of Cartini are subtle yet clear, straightforward and most of all, future proof. Glassy greens have been used as the new neutrals and these colours draw on the traits of honesty and transparency. As we learned from extensive research, ethereal greens and intelligent blues are reminiscent of surreal eco-tech grass and sky.

Further, we meticulously thought through the palettes of the colours in each of the categories of the cutting tools before assigning the hues that best denote the craft. Winning products, with the help of their hues, are expected to stimulate all our senses simultaneously and help focus on clarity and direct communication. That is exactly what deep teal, and its other colours, achieve in all the ranges of Cartini.

Back to basics for a brighter future

In order to carry out a colour change, we first begin with ground research that is done like anthropology. Pointed questions are not asked but we observe various patterns of our target audience in their comfort zones. We collect information by observation. We then define and form an expectation from the product and how the consumer would receive it.

When questions are directly asked to the end users they are mainly targeted to cut out any negative associations with the product. We may then share actual mood boards or colour concepts with them to understand what they like. However, it is important to know the difference between them liking something and actually buying it. Complete knowledge and a correct interpretation of the information collected is important at this stage.

All the companies we have worked with have had a colour department—some small while others large. Thus, colour design is being taken seriously; be it in industries such as cosmetics, automobiles, appliances or stationary. People have become conscious towards it.

As told to Sabiha Ghiasi.

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The colour wheel depicts the variety of colours that we considered before spotting royal teal as the right shade for Cartini.
Think, then make

Design-led thinking is a way of life. It is not simply to do with a product or its design. It is an aspect of creation and innovation that every employee should be thinking about and practising. It means being continuously aware of the need to improve everything that matters in terms of customer expectations and the business’s processes. This thinking will go on to improve the quality of life, if carried out in unity.

When a business is design-led, it means that it understands customers and constantly evolves to provide them with a superlative product or service experience. The core focus should always be the consumers; it is the only way to build a brand and forge a bond with them.

Keeping the focus

Companies tend to get bogged down by the daily routines of conducting business and lose focus on their end customers. But this is unacceptable because your offering is basically for an end user. It is the top management’s responsibility to align employees as well as functions of the company with the end users. They should go back to the drawing board and rethink how each process is being managed. Most importantly, they should think of ways to improve them; even if it means working harder and longer for a better product or service.

As a product-design company, our prerogative is to think in terms of the practical use of a product. In the case of Godrej locks, we imagine them being used by our near and dear ones. To understand how your product or service will fair, envisage it in its place of use. This way, you can evaluate every idea in any scenario. Also, one must always seek latent or unmet needs. Consumers don’t spell out what they need. You have to put yourself in their shoes, imagine their way of life, and then try to improve it.

Innovation as a by-product

Design-led thinking leads to innovation. If you continuously push yourself to think differently and improve someone’s life, it is going to lead to innovation. It will also be imbedded in each process of the business.

We designed a top-loading washing machine for Godrej Appliances called Glitz. This product has set new benchmarks and is innovative at multiple levels. With it, we have tried to rethink and redefine the age-old activity of washing clothes.

We realised that most garments are prewashed so that they may be free of stains. Even the detergent industry is struggling with a complete solution for this common issue. In the process of washing, apart from the detergent, a mechanic agitation in the clothing’s fibre is required. To facilitate this, we proposed an ultra-sonic mechanism of washing clothes by using very high-frequency sound waves.

We even used innovative means to demonstrate the capability of ultra-sonic cleaning. We held many trials with dentists, who use an ultra-sonic hand-held cleaner for tooth clean ups. We decided to try this method in a washing machine and were success.

Thus, when we say design-led thinking is a way of life, it also includes connecting two seemingly unrelated industries to achieve the desired result; like in the case of Glitz. Our idea also turned out to be energy-saving.

Indian companies need to start thinking about design as an investment and not as a cost. They need to understand that design is a tool that brings their brand’s promise and core values to life.

As told to Sabiha Ghiasi by experts at Futuring Design.
In 1902, Indian-made safes were few and scattered and didn’t hold a candle to their British counterparts. Ardeshir decided to change this in a small corner at Godrej’s locking solutions’ factory. He quickly learned that the European and American safes that held a monopoly in India were not of very superior quality. A fire in San Francisco in 1908 had destroyed the safes so much so that a news article had compared them to wooden boxes; they had burned and perished that fast.

After unearthing other misconceptions, he was determined to manufacture a safe that was broad-spectrum calamity resistant. He first introduced were few of our trademark electric locks, the latest and vibrant range of Mensa and Lyra handles were being showcased for the very first time as well as the launch of rim locks took place at the events in both Bahrain and Dubai.

The meeting was an academic experience for our partners in the GCC markets and provided a thorough overview of our work in this geography. It was also an ideal platform for them to understand GLSS’s various products.

A retailers’ meet was held in Bahrain on November 29, 2014, and the other in Dubai on December 19, 2014. These meets were organised in order to educate and introduce the existing retail partners to new, market-specific product offerings as well as create brand awareness among them and also, potential retailers. The former event saw 165 partners and 145 retailers attended the latter.

Among the products on display and to be bust the myth that a safe needed to be heavy to be secure. It was all in the design, he explained, not in the weight. He formulated a fire-proof solution, chemically, that would protect a safe from the worst heat. Better still, he explicitly demonstrated how this safe was burglar proof too.

The ultimate test of the Godrej safe came in 1944 when wartime ammunition caused tremendous loss of property and money at the Bombay Docks. However, a Godrej safe saved ₹ 5.5 lakh for the Union Bank. Godrej has, seen then, supplied 92% security equipment in India; mostly to national banks. It was a proud achievement for Ardeshir to see that at least one security solution was completely manufactured in India, and was self-sufficient and self-reliant.

Most of all, they understood well the various ways of marketing and positioning the myriad products.

Within a week of our meet in Bahrain, we received an order from Delta. Similarly, Sabano, UAE came to us with an order within a fortnight of the UAE meet.