

'Design is a
creative means to
achieve a Realistic
and powerful result'

"Design is about understanding the needs of end customers and solving their problems," says **Anil Sondur**, VP- IDE, Tata Elxsi. In an exclusive interview with **K T P Radhika Jinoy**, he discusses various steps that should be taken to give design its due recognition.

E VOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN IN INDIA

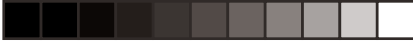
Design is embedded in the ethos of India, and for centuries it has been displayed through our ingenuity in architecture, art and other cultural manifestations. Unfortunately, India missed the Industrial Revolution, and by the time it recovered, it had to encounter several challenges to keep pace with other countries.

Meanwhile, other countries having gone through the learning curve were slowly graduating to superior products, which had high functionality and were aesthetically appealing. India started using these products and gradually adapted the design expertise

to develop their own products. However, over the years, India has witnessed rapid momentum in the field of design, fuelled by the evolution of customers as well as the progress of design as a discipline. The Government of India has supported this endeavour through setting up of premier institutions such as the Industrial Design Centre (IDC), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and National Institute of Design (NID) that have been churning out talent for years.

Design in India is therefore gaining prominence across various industries and is considered a key differentiator for any brand. Today, design is not just the prerogative of big multinationals, but even regional brands understand the role of design and the value it adds.

The right mix of people & resources coupled with a willingness to adopt innovation and technological advancements will enable companies to overcome the barriers to design innovation.



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OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO DESIGN INNOVATION

Conventional approach to design development, poor availability of technology, high cost of development as well as inadequate involvement of key stakeholders – to ensure continuity of the process

In the past, advances in design have been driven by the development of new materials, processes and product architecture. With the strain on natural materials, organisations in the future will consider combining the strengths of various materials to create a unique and superior material. The materials of the future will also have to be sustainable.

of innovation—are the factors that impede design innovation. This can be summarised into three key barriers - managerial, technological and financial. One needs to have a long-term objective to overcome these barriers. Moreover, the acceptance from the end customers decides the success of the innovation and its longevity.

With the right mix of people & resources coupled with a willingness to adopt innovation and technological advancements, making it a part of the development eco-system, these barriers can definitely be overcome.

SUCCESSFUL AND WINNING DESIGN

Design as a discipline aims at solving problems or enhancing lives of end users worldwide. End users today are very demanding and have many expectations from brands, which, if not complied with, have a possibility of going into oblivion in a short period. Hence, it is important that any design should address the needs of the end user. It also has to be functionally and financially viable to appeal to a wide range of end users. It, therefore, is a combination of using a creative solution and channelising it in the right direction to obtain the optimum output.

In other words, it is an inspiration that sparks a creative idea, which needs to be driven through a process to make it a viable business.

ACHIEVING 'DESIGN SUCCESS'

Today, design is about understanding the needs of end customers, the role a design will play in their life and the technology of realising the design. Organisations, therefore, should focus on these aspects to ensure integration of these aspects into a homogeneous design so as to address all expectations of the customer. Moreover, there should be an underlining notion of innovation to ensure that the designs help the brand owners to create a differentiator.

FACTORS TO LEAD INDIA TOWARDS BECOMING A GLOBAL DESIGN HUB

While several factors can enable India to become the global design hub, the key factors include talent, technological expertise, focus on innovation, ability to optimise development and acute understanding of customers' needs.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY

The government and industry both play an important role in giving

design its due recognition.

The government and industry need to strongly advocate the tangible and intangible benefits of design, regardless of the type of industry it is being applied to. They should take initiatives to create awareness among original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and service providers about the competitive advantage of original designs and target small-scale & cottage industries to encourage greater use of designs in all products in India. Efforts should be taken to position India as a leading propagator and practitioner of high-quality & prudent design as well as impart training for design development at every level and make it a part of the system. They should promote exchange of design with other countries and renowned institutions by creating a seamless channel for development. The government and industry should make efforts to spark interest in creative and cultural industries to enable designers to draw upon India's rich cultural heritage for inspiration to create novel and distinctive designs.

They should emphasise on creation of original Indian designs in products & services in order to create a design-enabled innovation economy.

LABELLING 'DESIGNED IN INDIA' ON ALL MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS IN INDIA

India is slowly but surely transforming into a global research & development (R&D) hub. Design is a critical element of any R&D activity and is expected to play a greater role in product development. Customers have now begun to demand the latest designs and technologies available around the world but with an Indian influence. The time is not far when India will transform into a new superpower in the field of design and certain product categories will be associated with being Indian.

ROLE OF NEW MATERIALS IN DESIGN ADVANCEMENTS

In the past, advances in design have been driven by the development of new materials, processes and product architecture. For example, the use of composite materials has made aircraft and cars lighter, thereby increasing their performance.

With the strain on natural materials, organisations in the future will consider combining the strengths of various materials to create a unique and superior material. The materials of the future will also have to be sustainable.

CATALYSTS FOR DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The catalysts are innovation, technology and design processes, which when combined, can create truly intuitive designs. Moreover, support by the government will play a paramount role in promoting design and its collaboration with private organisations in order to create an eco-system for design development.

CREATING A NOVEL BREAKTHROUGH PRODUCT

There is a need to identify key opportunities, innovate through design and implement it in the most efficient manner so as to realise a higher percentage of innovative products.

DESIGNING FOR SUCCESS

Tata Elxsi believes design to be the creative means to achieve a realistic and powerful result. ■