



Ford

Automotive interiors

Challenge

Ford of Europe (FoE) invited PDD to collaborate with the Advanced Product Group (APG) in an automotive design and interior modelling project. FoE wanted to use a multi-skilled creative/research agency in order to identify genuine consumer insights / unmet needs and translate these into product solutions that would enhance their targeted consumers' lives.

In the words of a member of the APG team, "PDD were a natural choice to deliver meaningful innovation due to their long experience in user research, along with their design and technical development expertise."

The project focused on a relatively specialised category of vehicle: the Ford APG team would work on the exterior and a combined effort with PDD would focus on the interior.

Solution

The project began with a three-country study (France, Germany and UK) conducted by PDD's research team to investigate the needs of the new vehicle's target users and produce insights for the development stage. Researchers observed scenarios like the school run, a barbecue, IKEA visits and investigated key issues such as luggage, food on-the-go, and flexible storage.

For domestic users the research developed the concept of 'We Space': bringing the driver, navigator and back-sitters together with space, functionality, features, lighting systems etc. The parallel concept of 'Me Space' informed the

development of an interior suited to commercial drivers with a secure, comfortable cocoon, organised for the person using it eight hours a day.

Other fundamental issues included ingress and egress: flexibility around the vehicle through door configuration helped the designers think 'outside the vehicle' in more general terms.

Automotive prototypes rigs and models, known as 'bucks', typically have closely defined roles: a 'white buck' of unfinished card and foam is used to assess functional, mechanical and spatial issues and a 'black buck' communicates overall showroom appeal.

For this project the team developed what became termed a 'grey' buck which combined black and white to realistic effect, made possible by the integrated nature of the teams and the permanent presence of development prototypes.

PDD took delivery of a donor vehicle in its secure, automotive design space which was used as a white buck model for real scale, rough and ready design and development on-the-hoof. Both teams worked in parallel on the white buck elements producing a rich cross-over of ideas in a much shorter timescale than one involving both black and white bucks.

With the challenges of twin-site development in mind the project made use of FTP site-mounted video-dialogue throughout the rapid development process. This enhanced the problem solving, understanding and speed of the joint project, side-stepping difficulties the car maker had experienced with past development partners.

In the physical testing stage Ford and PDD had twelve 'big ideas' to test on target consumer groups. During comparative interior testing PDD prototypes were on hand to fix and refit between user groups.

The vehicle mock-ups, in large dedicated hangars in the three countries, saw moderators skilfully negotiate responses to a complex set of issues.

Result

The results were formulated into a final vehicle proposal which formed the basis of a presentation by APG team to upper management. The metrics of positive feedback exceeded comparable projects with a very high percentage of ideas given the development 'green light' and others prepared for future consideration.

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APG Team

Building deep relationships that deliver meaningful innovation

For more information email info@pdd.co.uk or visit our website

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