



SEE DESIGN
Sharing Experience
on Design Support
for SMEs

TRANSCRIPT

EWDS - European Workshop on Design Support
Austrian Cultural Forum, Prague, 4 October 2007 - Session 2

AGENDA

- **The use of design in the Adamov Systems company** - Martin Tvarůžek & Roman Czudek
- **Slovak Design Centre** – Katarína Hubová
- **Questions & answers**

LZ: Lenka Žižkova, Deputy Director, Design Centre of the Czech Republic

MT: Martin Tvarůžek, Designer

RC: Roman Czudek, Corporate Director, Adamov-Systems, a.s.

KH: Katarína Hubová, Director, Slovakia Design Centre

LZ: There are a couple of designers Martin Tvarůžek has worked for Adamov Systems and Roman Czudek is the Corporate Director and Katarína Hubová will tell you about how the Slovak Design Centre works in Bratislava. As Ingrid mentioned in her speech, we exhibited in Brussels and they did exhibitions in the Czech Republic and the invitation cards are mostly very serious and formal, to show that it's a State funded institution that there must be no jokes and stuff. When Belgium received our details they proposed or designed the invitation card and when we came to Belgium the invitation card was a Mickey Mouse with the Czech flag at the top. The Czech part was a bit shocked but it was very amusing actually.

Martin Tvarůžek the floor is yours. He is going to present one of the successful projects.

MT: Ladies and gentlemen welcome to the workshop I'm Martin Tvarůžek, since 1996 I have been an industrial designer and this presentation aims to first share my experience of a designer and secondly to describe in detail one of the successful projects that I did with Adamov Systems, one of the industrial manufacturers.

I need your patience I don't feel particularly debonair today and I'm not a brilliant speaker, so please be patient with me. These are some general facts on design, as we know in the morning, design will bring nine employees on average, but I would like to share my experience from the practical life really. Clients when they hear industrial design they usually think of the new particular product the form and size, but I don't persuade clients to choose me but I explain to them what industrial design is in general. One of the troubles involved in the process is that most businesses think that design only concerns well off companies, but of course design is not only Formula 1 and attractive hostesses and opening ceremonies, I have to explain all that to them. The myths, the false beliefs that I come across is that clients think that designers drink a couple of beers and draw the design and that's it. Having explained all this to the clients I explain to them the key aspect of design and there are quite a few interesting and important facts. The goal of designers and design centres is to spread information. The companies that come in touch with design are more and more numerous thanks to the spread of information and all those exhibitions and events held by design centres by designers. They become more and more aware. The companies I approach are usually led by engineers civil or mechanical engineers and when they leave work each day they look at cars of top brands, top makes, but when they are not experienced that's actually what they think design is about: cars of top makes. I have met people insisting on the particular size of the product that would fit in an exhibition hall, so there are some limits and constraints. And yes on the left top left corner ...

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... some modifications were made to the unit, it decreased in size and the central part remains the same, the size remains the same although we increased the output of the unit and thanks to design this unit entered the world's markets and it was awarded a number of awards as well. Designers are part of the overall design policies, I have been lucky to talk to companies that know what they want, although we had to overcome some limits, but we got there eventually. Most of the people, be it engineers, designers, economists, they know what to do with design but the important part of launching a new design is that it brings you new opportunities, economic opportunities, you join competitions. In the developed countries or in West Europe, if you offer products that have a guarantee of 10-15 years such as heat pumps, it is important that the company enjoys better reputation if it invests into the design. Clients regularly appreciate that anyone who invests in innovation, those companies are more competitive on the market.

I'm in slight opposition to design if you will, because I'm not for doing empty things just for the sake of innovation. I like to be responsible, in economic as well as environmental terms. I always look for as many shared expertises possible. The initial process is a little bit lengthy, but we think really hard before we start designing. One of the things is the unification of the units; heat pumps were one of the examples. These are one of the products I designed in the summer. I wanted to innovate this box as a ventilation control unit. They called me up on a Thursday and they needed it by the next Tuesday. I said, well I'm ready to prepare documents or launching the design but not to design as such and they had several meetings discussing the initial documents and they found it was going in the right direction and we lost 3-4 weeks discussing things. But some of the issues I described in the initial document were important. And when they were discussed, we all figured out all the minor details and I suggested that we expand the work. This device is what sells most on the Czech market, so we could have a completely new design by introducing a very small thing and by that we could be successful on a much more general basis. I think it's all about awareness and lack of awareness and economies or the Czech economy has had its ups and downs and most companies do not know what to look for. They know they need a new design but do not know what the new design would bring them, what are all the benefits. Now what does design bring to producers. Adamov Systems which I'll talk about later, designers should not promote their dreams just for the sake of being on the market, you have to be much more sensible and sensitive to all the details of the project and see the limits and pros and contrasts, discuss things with the economic department of the company and overcome the technical balances and you have to communicate with all aspects. The CEO the General Director of Adamov Systems is not here today unfortunately. He told me a month ago that the last project that they asked me to do they found that it's a great motivation for the employees. I had phone calls with them late in the evening and although some of them will not answer their phone normally at 4.00 or 5.00pm they talk to me as late as 11.00, so you can see that they are willing to discuss things. They stop being frustrated about innovation and I think this is a great profit for society at large. Another positive thing about design which I like to tell my clients is that it provokes people, it inspires them to do new things. Companies, SME's, they must be made to be ambitious, they have to overcome the barriers

To give you a great example, Adamov Systems has got many, many competitors in petrol station equipment, I can't imagine the CEO going to Vienna to visit ??? or another petrol giant company and go and pursue them to take over the design. I worked for two years as a manager of a private company and I managed to make people know that not only bribery is important, so my main point was design and the aesthetic aspect of things and Adamov Systems is a very enlightened client, very well informed, aware of the positive things, so they have understood that it had an impact on their economic figures and I wish there were more and more of these companies and people. In February they asked me to design roofs at petrol stations which they never had in the 80 years. I think it's a unique revolutionary decision, they really enjoy design and understand that this is a tool to realise promotion and they want unified part, roof part and poles, basically using the same ones everywhere. I'm talking about small and medium sized petrol stations. They have to get the equipment somewhere and Adamov Systems wanted to design these things in order to offer them to these small and medium sized petrol stations and design was very crucial.

We have different opinions on what design services should include so there's very much variation in the service that various designers offer, so this is just a brief list. Every project needs careful due care and successful projects should have a thorough preparation stage. You must harmonise your goals with economic and market plans and design should accelerate new marketing opportunities. You have to think of the marketing as well as aesthetic aspects and only then do you think about the particular form and design. I approached a company that produces doors and doorframes and I wanted to talk to the marketing manager and there was no one to talk to me. So I said what direction should we take if you want to have a door frame designed, I'll send you a young designer, a student and they will have a couple of beers and design it for you, but if you want a sensible solution you have to think about it really hard, have some suggestions and build upon them and discuss the positive and negative things. All that has to be discussed you can't just say we want new doorframes. Adamov

Systems and the roofs at petrol stations, that was a nice example where design accelerated new marketing opportunities.

Now we're coming to the particular project of petrol station devices. We have been working on that since 2004. A brief description about Adamov Systems company but I think my colleague Mr Czudek will be talking about that in more detail. So this company decided to do a new pump unit and they needed for certain reasons, the reason was they wanted to show something new so they found there is a need to hire a designer, to co-operate with the designer. It was important that in the brief for me were such things as decreasing the cost, decreasing the price of this device. It was really important that there was unification of the individual parts of the whole device, so it can be handwritten hundreds of drawings of visualisation, you are dealing with changing 5mm just to reach what they want, what they need. When I was getting familiar with this device or with this pump, the device or the pump station, it was really new to me. The first thing that was surprising was the cover of the pipe, it was 2 or 3 kilos heavy this covering. And I have a feeling that it's not that important whether I make a good or bad design but sometimes these things are already sorted out in nature. So I started out with something which is called cementing design and I used a similar thing in constructing this oil pipe I will show in the picture. I have used this part making it a 'V' shape which you can see immediately that it is a 'V' shape that you should give the drivers, the drivers then see that they should put that pipe into that place, there is an aluminium covering which ensures also a good stabilisation fixation of this pump pistol. So that was the light motif for me. The project has one message whether it is nice or not, whether someone likes it or not it's not that important to me because the idea was so strong it was enough for me and the important project was we used not 2mm thick sheet but 1½mm thick sheet of metal, so that it was the decreasing of cost, the company did not have to increase the price although they used better materials which has a longer lifecycle. So this is for me what also is so important about industrial design. If you see this box in the corners you can see that the diagonals are different so that the light shows up differently so you can see there it looks interesting, that's what I was trying to reach. You could use the creative approach here but of course I knew what materials were used there I had to take it into consideration. The result, summary saving of material and money, better materials, better appearance and resistance, increasing of turnover, coming into new markets. So I think that was all, if you have any questions I would be happy to answer them. It is not the case so I would like to thank you and wish you a pleasant afternoon.

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LZ: I would like to thank Martin and one thing I would like to add, I was returning from somewhere and I needed to take some petrol so I stopped at the petrol station and started to fill the tank and I started to take the petrol and I suddenly realised it's so light, it's so pleasant to hold this pistol so I tried to look at it and then I saw it's this project so I can tell you that also it's good for women to hold the pistol, it's very light to handle.

MT: Well in the studio I have two people, me I work as an idea maker which means I'm creating the concepts and then these are collaborated and finished up. So two people sitting there and two people external workers.

LZ: For our foreign colleagues in the Czech Republic the situation of these designer studios is changing every day because there is a really wide range of those offering design so it's different. There could be studios with one or two people to the big professional mostly graphic studios which are quite in a boom these days and they have many, many people and specialisations as well.

Now I would like to give the floor to the member of the board of Adamov Systems Mr Czudek and he will explain to you from another point of view the same thing you just heard.

RC: Good afternoon my name is Roman Czudek, I am a member of the board of Adamov Systems Company and I am responsible for among other things, purchasing of materials and services. I would like to give you a brief description of our company profile. We are a company making petrol station devices for liquid and gas fuels. Our main production program are the pistols and the technical devices for petrol stations. Just briefly about the history of our company. Our company was established in 1924 as the company Heffer in Prague producing petrol station devices. We have one of these in our company today. In 1961 the production was moved to Adamov plant, 2003 the shareholders bought the company and there was some changes introduced, the most important change was in 2005 when we started our new model range and we changed the name also to Adamov Systems, so it no more Adast it's now Adamov Systems.

In 2004 the management decided to develop a new model range, why the decision came was it was the competition which pushed us to decrease the cost of the price of these petrol station devices. We had a model range for approximately 7 years and we then sort of hit the bottom. So the technical department was given a

task to develop a completely new range of these technical devices for the petrol station. Why did we decide to deal with design, there were two aspects, one was the commercial and the other technical, the commercial or business aspect is clear, we had to offer our customers a competitive product with a longer lifecycle with smaller cost. We wanted to surprise our customers with something new, with something original, and we wanted to put it to our customers along with the change of brand name from Adast to Adamov Systems, so there were economical reasons and technical reasons.

We wanted to unify the individual parts, to make the construction easier, to make the number of parts used smaller and we wanted to decrease the production costs. We also had a new hydraulic unit, there was one previous to the introduction of these changes, so it means that if you are filling the tank of your car you take the correct amount of fuel, that's what this unit basically does. I work with design, how it went, what was the proceedings. I also responded before for the tender for choosing the designer. At the beginning I had some doubt about the money which the designers demanded, designers who offer their services to us. In the second half of 2004 we opened a tender and we chose four designer studios, we gave them a task to create a new design for our petrol station devices. During this tender somewhere in Autumn 2004, we got acquainted with Mr Tvarůžek and we accepted him into this tender as well. The task was the same for all designers, there were many limiting conditions because the petrol station devices were under danger of explosion, so there were many technical conditions which these devices must fulfil, so the new product must be given a certificate by the appropriate authorities and it is not a cheap issue and it is not a short-term issue. So the design studios were given a task to come up with something new in appearance, something which would differentiate us from our competition and plus of course fulfil all the technical conditions. The most important thing we learnt from this process I would like to mention one motto which our manager came with: it's important for companies not to just listen to some pleasant words about references but to look at practical approaches to design, the ability to understand the products, understand the market and understand the possibilities and capabilities of the company and the supplies. One thing is to draw something very nice and futuristic in its shape but another thing is to be able to produce such a product with this design and to sell it for a competitive price.

In January 2005, we came to the end of the tender, we were given the proposals from all designers and we have chosen Mr Tvarůžek as our main designer and we have signed a contract for design 2005, we have applied for program support for design, so we applied, we were successful and since 2005 we as Adamov System have co-operated with the Design Centre in the Czech Republic. In September the first visualisation was ready and we pledged to introduce our product in Moscow in October 2005. We managed it, it was really at the last minute, but we managed. So there was this new design of this technical device for petrol stations and we named this line Adamov 'V' Line. Adamov 'V' Line is the old company Adast with a new face, that was our motto. We combined the direct appearance with good characteristics of the product. We talked about it not being a problem for men to take the fuel into their car but for women, it might be a problem. We have approximately 190 employees so we made a test with our female employees, because for women maybe it's much harder to handle these tank fillings. So we asked them what's better for them according to the size of these devices, what's the best position, what's the best height. So this was also important for the designer. The height, the aluminium cover.... You come there with a car.... Well there are other technical conditions that you experience as drivers and you all know about them. So handling these technical devices is now easier, as for materials we have used steel and we decreased by 25-30% the construction issues, the construction materials, so it means reducing production costs. The most important aspect I would like to stress here is that in the Autumn 2005 we started negotiations with our partners here and abroad, telling them we had a new product that we wanted to sell from 2006, we of course had to guarantee to be given the certifications and all our partners told us well it looks nice, we could do something better but isn't it too expensive, we think it's more expensive than the previous ones, but by decreasing the number of construction parts and by introducing the new 'V' profile which we applied to all the model ranges, the result was to reduce by 10% the production costs, so we were able to tell our partners no, this device would have the same price as the previous. So that was a profit for us.

As an award for the work of our designers and all of the team we were given the prestigious award of excellent design, excellent product in 2007 for the category Product Design. And then in May 2007 we were awarded an excellent product award in Poland and then in the Ukraine in February 2007.

Another positive aspect was the exhibition in Frankfurt last year, there were two CEO's from our competition from a company producing hundred times the volume that we produced and they were surprised, they congratulated us on this success. So this is our product, you can see it, that's the biggest model range we have, this is the second one, this is called Popular, it is for one or two fuels. This is for LPG the smallest is 'V' Line Minor, which is the name of this model range. You see that in all three there is this 'V' line, there is a V shaped profile, this door is the same so it's unified, we were successful in that. We could go a little further but maybe we are confident in our next model range and that the impact of design on our business activity in

Russia, which is our main market, we have increased our profit by 50% and our company is also seen as something new, because before we introduced our new range we were considered an old traditional company, but now our employees they also see the change, they are happy about the change. I've talked about the awards, increasing of profit already and although the prices of materials are going up, we were able to keep the prices and we can be competitive and we also could increase the warranty by one year. Plus with the V profile as Mr Tvarůžek already mentioned, he made a project for low cost petrol stations and our company contributed to that and all products we are producing we are trying to implement this V Line, this V profile. As an example of something that isn't that common in the Czech Republic that's where you come with a car, there is nobody there, you put your credit card in this device and you can take the fuel. It's not that common in the Czech Republic but we are working on that also in cooperation with the banks. This is a project for Czech customers also but we are also trying to come into the Sudan market. A month ago there was a delegation from Sudanese companies, there was also the former Minister of business and they were very enthusiastic about this project. In Sudan there are approximately 2,000 petrol stations we have around 6,000 just to compare. So that's the direction, that's the way we would like to go. We expect that in the next year we'll have some 10-15% increase in profit. So I would like to thank you for your attention and I would be happy to answer all your questions.

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LZ: This was some very optimistic news; and our last speaker is Katarína Hubová the Director of the Slovak Centre of Design in Bratislava. We are in constant and intensive touch with our Slovak friends so we know their products pretty well.

[Presentation: EWDS Prague – Slovak Design Centre]

KH: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I can't present one particular project in design support to SME's but the activities of the Slovak Design Centre on the whole are very crucial and beneficial for design support. The Slovak Centre for Design is the only State instrument for design support, it was launched in 1991, 16 years ago. It has 12 employees which has been the same for 8 years, the budget has been virtually the same with a quarter of a million Euros. We don't have a special building, we rent offices so I can't boast any pictures of our own building. We are run by the Ministry of Culture, that's where our funding comes from, therefore our activities focus on the cultural aspect of design and it was only in the recent years that we have expended them towards the business sphere. We want to build links between the creative part and the practical life and in the 16 years we've seen various awards and traditions. We also have our national award, we hold exhibitions in various parts of Slovakia, we bring out magazines, we join international events such as fairs and exhibitions and through all of this we build and develop a reputation and we also like to co-operate with foreign countries, we are on very good terms with the Czech Design Centre. Since 1993 we have been a member of ICOGRADA and BEDA.

Since we joined the EU, the Slovak Design Centre has become an important meeting point for international designers as well as design companies and studios. These are our priorities in the domestic area. In the Ministry of Culture we are mostly an information and documentation centre, so the database and information database systems are the main tools that we run. The database is the only design database in Slovakia and currently there are books, designers' institutions, schools, all institutions that have something to do with design are included in the database. We have a special library with books on design and it's accessible through our website. Last year we launched an electronic newsletter with news on current events. Promotion, education and counselling are our top activities. We hold exhibitions and we provide counselling to other organisers of exhibitions. We hold a competition for the Slovak post service, for museums, we mostly focus on exhibitions that bring fresh ideas on Slovak design such as Design in Slovakia 1992 – 2005, schools of industrial design those were parts of the exhibition. Slovak Typography since 1980 to 2006, it was the first occasion when typography was included in design exhibitions. Design Forum 2007 and Slovak Academy had students exhibit at our events. The students presented their products at various events. ICOGRADA supports one of the exhibitions, it's an exhibition on advertising posters; we hold workshops, seminars, conferences. We do rent our own exhibition room, I'm afraid we have to rent it, we don't own it and we only started recently so there have only been eight exhibitions so far, but in the future we would like to present the process of production.

The Slovak Design Centre is the only place showing books on design in Slovakia. In the last 20 years we have been the only publisher, this magazine is the only magazine on design in Slovakia, that's what we bring out. We have brought out a book on the history of design in Slovakia. The motivation for one of the books was the boom of multimedia and ??? who is the author, gives an outline of the history of graphic design. Since the prehistoric stage up to the end of the 20th Century we've got other books telling the successful stories of companies and designers who appeared, obviously after the fall of Communism. This year we would like to

launch a new edition of monographs on Slovak designers called Mapping Design. Another book is called Design and Companies called Dizajn a firmy, brought out by the University of Fine Arts. We are interested in companies and co-operating with companies. The book is in Slovak only, but it depicts the history after the fall of communism 1989 as there were revolutionary changes to the company's economy and there are interviews with 15 companies.

We co-operate with producers of course, we hold events such as the National Prize for Design. The contest monitors companies that use design. Since 1993 it's the only platform monitoring companies that design their products. We don't have the exact statistics but I think there are more than 50 of them in Slovakia. The goal is to promote companies that prefer to use design in producing their own products and to highlight those who are willing to employ professional designers, the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Education have joined us in the competition. The first winner is a furniture manufacturer and the Culture Minister awarded a personal award it's one of the most famous designers was awarded this prize. In June we hold the 8th year of the contest but I'm afraid I can't announce the winners yet but I can say that this year really we can see the benefit of the changes that have taken place recently. The contest is open to all European countries. We need to co-operate with other fields of course, we promote the introduction of design into various fields. The Slovak Centre of Design, apart from awarding various prizes and bringing out the books and magazines; the Centre has co-operated with companies that use design in their practical lives. We have to know the environment, the background of these companies. A programme called Design which was a joint initiative with the National Agency for Promotion of SME's and with the Czech Design Centre was quite successful but after the latest election the Ministry of Industry and Trade wants to take over the project. There's a strategy on the competitiveness of Slovak design by 2010 and the Ministry of Education suggested that the agency for Research and Development included designers, on the tools of research and development and that initiative will be funded by the EU. As I said, we co-operate with the National Industry for Research and Development for SME's and we did research in 2006 and it focused on innovation conducted by SME's. We prepared a huge questionnaire, only a few of the questions were finally conducted, but one of them was the impact on the economy aspect, for example, we found out that design was important for those companies that had a turnover of 10-15 million Slovak crowns and employed 10-250 employees mainly manufacturers. Those who specialise in agricultural or food industry do not appreciate design, that's one of the findings of research.

I'll give you some practical examples. Some of the companies that have been successful and who have used professional designers – this one is a glass manufacturer founded 115 years ago, a very famous make of drinking glass and they used to employ the top leading Slovak designers, unfortunately currently they only employ their own internal designers, but the interesting fact is that they survived the post-Communism transformation, so they are still there. Chirana Medical a.s. Stará Turá, this is an armchair for dentists, this company is very old as well, it's been manufacturing dentist's armchairs since the 1960s and they have employed a professional designer for 15 years and they are very successful in export. This is a furniture manufacturer, upholstery furniture is what they focus on. The armchair was awarded a very important prize and they were motivated and started to do their own design. Brik a.s. Kremnica is another and successful furniture manufacturer, initially there were two partners, two people with no experience in furniture making whatsoever, but this is an example how enthusiasm may develop into a very successful company. Currently they are producing more than 300 kinds of furniture for living rooms, kitchens and they have their outlets all over Europe. K1 is a car maker, a very small company, an example of companies that are cropping up after 2000. A thesis of a university student was the beginning and only later did it develop into a serious production and it's mostly exported to the United States. Same background is popular – again two students had a thesis designing these handbags and a new company started from that.

Gotive a.s., this company is mainly successful on the international market and uses the recent technologies. Aerospol produces ultra light aircraft which is not really a frequent industry in Slovakia. Two pilots started it and they now use the most modern materials so they're only putting their foot in the door. Again here is another example of student design being taken up by businesses and producers; currently they produce 1800 pieces a year. Kofola, this company innovated the package of mineral water and the new package has helped the company to become very successful in the Slovak market. Trek Sport, again enthusiastic sportsmen began to make outdoor equipment, clothes and backpacks, they only produced this for small expeditions and they later became real experts on outdoor equipment, so currently it's a very successful company. They produce sleeping bags and tents. Let me tell you finally that the Slovak background is quite different to the rest of Europe and the Czech Republic because there are a few gaps in design in Slovakia. There's no museum of design or applied arts, no research or collection institutions, we don't have enough theoreticians and journalists specialising in design. The next 10 years we should profile new institutions such as a museum for design and applied arts and institutions and design centres and research centres. Thank you.

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So I would like to thank Katarína Hubová for her presentation. Now a few students have left for the afternoon lessons so we'll just say a few words in conclusion. We are very happy that you have come here and we will be really glad to repeat similar seminars with different focii, we have some plans for this for the future so we will see whether we will ever get a chance to meet again. Thank you very much and we wish our foreign guests a pleasant flight home and we would like to invite you at 4 o'clock there is a discussion with the authors of the exhibition of artists from 1990, you can taste the original Czech beer, so maybe at least for men it will be great !!!!