

Unity Through Design

Lamp design, fostering a sense of unity within DCW

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The project Unity Through Design is about designing a table lamp for the company DCW (Deze Combinatie Werkt). This company provides employment for individuals with a "Work disability." Their six various production units, handle projects in areas like packaging, assembly, sewing, (3D) printing, woodworking, catering and gardening. The independent processes of DCW's units, result into division within the company. The goal of this project is to create unity within DCW by designing a small table lamp, reflecting DCW's identity and characteristics. The lamp is primarily designed for on the dining tables of DCW's future restaurant, but also for shop sale. Two main research questions guide the project:

"How can a lamp, produced by individuals with a distance to the labour market, promote a feeling of unity?"

"And how can this lamp convey the characteristics of the company?"

To answer these two main questions, various sub questions are investigated. Initially, an in-depth study of DCW focused on understanding their divisions, stakeholders, and core values, is done. This has been an important step to identify the characteristics of DCW, that need to be conveyed into the design of the lamp. Then research is done on the employees. This provided valuable insights into their identities, capabilities, and considerations for the design process. This sub question is answered by conducting interviews with the several departments of DCW. These interviews also gave information on how to foster unity within the company. After that, market research has started, drawing comparisons between DCW and similar companies. This gave insights into what products are produced by similar companies and how they emphasise the core values of their company. To effectively convey a message through the final lamp design and to understand how a product influences someone's perception, additional research is conducted on product symbolism. Finally, market research is done on product lamps, together with determining dimensions, and outlining functional requirements.

The main objective of this project is to foster a sense of unity within DCW, which is done through two approaches:

Firstly, unity is encouraged by engaging all departments as much as possible in the production process. Additionally, the components of the lamp design vary in complexity, so that all employees feel included, without underestimating them.

Secondly, unity is further promoted by keeping employees informed throughout the design process. This is achieved by displaying relevant information on the screens in the living rooms of DCW, where the employees take breaks.

The other research question revolves around conveying the characteristics of DCW through design, utilising symbolic meanings. The key characteristics focused on are Unity, Sustainability, Connection, Trust, Family, Dynamic, Pride, Challenge, Diversity, and Fun. These words are selected based on the research conducted on DCW. To ensure that these characteristics are effectively conveyed in the design, two essential steps are taken.

Firstly, the application of functional design guidelines is crucial. Design features, such as shape, colour, and material, play a significant role in shaping an individual's perception of a product. By understanding the symbolic language of these features, the desired characteristics of DCW are effectively communicated. Collages of lamp designs are also created as an example on how to incorporate key words into the product.

Secondly, involving primary stakeholders during the design process is essential. This ensures that their perspectives on the product are considered, verifying if the intended message is successfully conveyed. The stakeholders of this project have been involved during research, ideation, concept development and in making the prototype.

After completing the research phase, the design process has started, leading to the creation of a unique table lamp designed for DCW, "Het DCW Lampje" (see figure 1). This lamp integrates a plant pot and a lamp, together with the DCW logo, symbolising family. In the plant pot a plant can be placed that is cultivated at De Kwekerij, embodying sustainability. The lamp illuminates the plant, also signifying sustainability and the growth of the company. The arc connecting the lamp to the plant pot visually represents the concept of connection within DCW. The colours of the lamp complement the meaning of the shapes of the product. The chosen colours include red, orange, and wood. The lampshade is in orange, representing a sense of happiness and warmth. Stripes of orange and red embracing the arc symbolise the colours of DCW, reflecting the familial connection highly valued by the company.



Figure 2 shows a render of the CAD model of the initial prototype. This prototype is 3D printed by the employees of DCW. The final lamp also consists of a textile lamp shade and the logo of DCW is engraved out of wood.

In conclusion, by following the design guidelines and involving the stakeholders while designing, the main objective to promote unity of the project is achieved. This has resulted into a table lamp design that serves as a visual representation of DCW's core values and characteristics. Therefore, the second goal is also achieved.