

SKY HD SET-TOP BOX

Challenge

Sky, Britain's largest pay-TV provider, is a high-profile company in the UK known for their innovation in programming and service. Now they are literally breaking the industry mold for set-top box design. With the redesign of their set-top boxes, Sky is setting the pace for the rest of the home entertainment market. Product form in this segment has always been steered by the OEMs, but now Sky is taking charge of their design language and innovating set-top box fabrication.

TV's Need for Style

Britons today are very design savvy and look for products that reflect their personalities. Phone companies express their brands with sleek phones, but a quick look at the market revealed that no one was doing the same for set-top boxes. Extensive collaboration at every level was key in designing products to fill that void. Ongoing feedback from design presentations helped frog and Sky arrive at a visual identity for the company.

A Form for Expression

A complete design overhaul of the entire product family was needed, including giving form to the new HD box. Even with the logo removed, the products needed to be distinctively Sky.

Currently 99% of products in the market are built with a metal housing and a plastic front. The new Sky products achieved an organic form using a largely plastic shell. This move was an industry breakthrough and is defining the future within this market, allowing more expression and individuality of products.

Collaborative Creation

Sky was strongly involved in the decision-making. The overall team construction and involvement in the complete design process was a big aspect of the success of the work.

Team structure produced a breakthrough in handling complexity. Three different manufacturers were selected to produce the boxes and Sky requested that they appear identical to customers. Because each OEM has a different circuit board and a different layout for placement of components, integrating these differences into seemingly identical products is an intricate process. It was crucial to go to the OEMs early on to prepare them, and then work in a three-way relationship with Sky and the OEMs to ensure success.



ABOVE

The uniquely designed Sky HD box successfully differentiates the brand from a crowded market.

Result

The collaboration was successful and the Sky brand evolved into a product family that has reinvigorated what was largely a visually stagnant market. The new product family brings to life Sky's values in a consistent design language across the product group. The Sky brand occupies an exclusive position as owning a unique, engaging and emotional line of products.

The HD box especially has been very well received. Blog site chatter reveals a lot of excitement about the product, there's a waiting list to get one, and European gadget magazine T3 called it the "most wanted product of 2006" and recently added it to their honorary hall of fame.

Work is currently underway on the second generation of products.