Communicating your design ideas

Who to?

Design proposals for new or improved textile products can only be turned into saleable items if the design team communicates these proposals effectively to clients, manufacturers and users. Clients may be large chain-stores which sell to a particular type of consumer, they may be manufacturers of specialist goods like sport and camping equipment or they may be theatrical television or film companies who need to create costumes and interiors from the past, the present or the future.

How?

To begin with, a designer or a team consisting of product, graphic and fabric designers will need specific information about the client's requirements. He or she will then develop a design folder based on current or historical fashion, colour and fabric trends appropriate to the client's needs. This will include sketches of the designs with variations and diagrammatic drawings to show the actual design lines and samples of fabric.

At this point the client will be consulted and any modifications in his or her requirements will be made. It is the designer's task to convince the client that the costing is accurate, the item will be suitable for mass production, and that it will have consumer appeal.

Clients for textile products

The next stage is to produce a prototype. For example, in the fashion industry, this will be done by making a **toile** (a calico version of the item). It will be worked on until the desired look and fit is achieved.

A card 'block' is then made. This is the pattern/ body shape in flat form. A size 12 sample of the garment in the appropriate fabric is made using this. At this point there is a second review to obtain the client's approval to begin manufacture. Production cannot begin without this.

The manufacturer receives the prototype, size 12 block and fabric samples. The team in the pattern development room examine the garment sample and test out the best and most economical form of production. An assembly manual is produced for factory use, CAD is used to grade the sizes required by the client, to draw up the most economic layout for those sizes and then to draw out the marker for the pattern cutting.

Small-scale production can now take place. New styles are sold in 'flagship' stores, such as Marks & Spencer in Oxford Street, to assess the product's 'hanger' appeal. If the trials are successful, mass production can begin.

Designing for interiors, the theatre and specialist stores is carried out in a similar way, although the client's needs, the fabrics used, and the methods of research, construction and testing may vary.
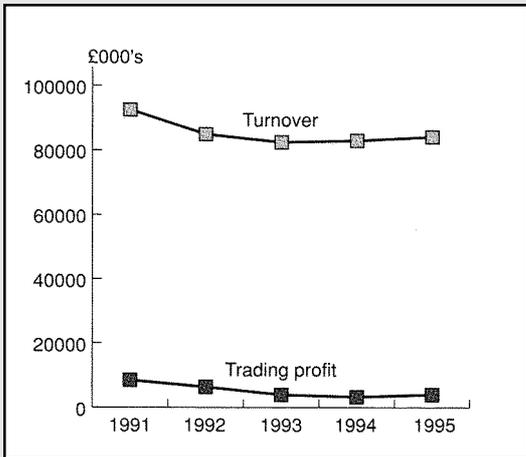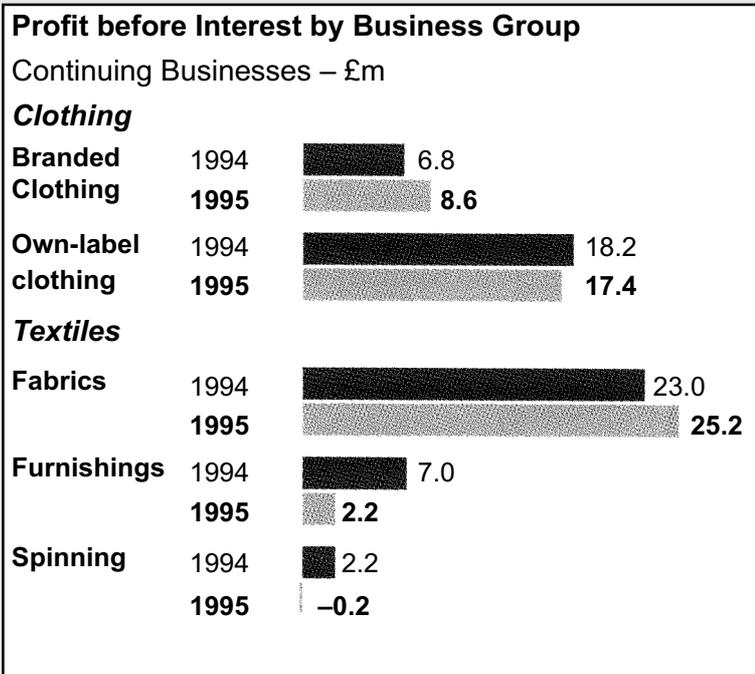
So you can see there are three important areas of communication.

1   Communicating with the client about the nature of the textile product. Designs must be clearly understood before the client will take them up.

2   Communicating with the manufacturer. If instructions are not exact, costly mistakes may occur which would halt the manufacturing process.

3   Communicating with the customer. If a product is to have customer appeal the advertising, packaging and overall appearance must be good. If this is unsuccessful, the product will not sell.

Each of these requires special communication techniques which are described in the rest of this unit.

Presenting data

Accurate facts and figures are used in industry to check on sales, production, profits, trends and so on. Often graphics present such information in a more easily accessible form. The panel below shows a range of graphic techniques useful for presenting data. You can use computer software to produce graphics like this. It takes time to learn how to do this but once you are familiar with the procedures you can produce attractive, accurate graphics very quickly.

Profit before Interest by Business Group

Continuing Businesses – £m

Clothing

Branded Clothing	1994	6.8
	1995	**8.6**
Own-label clothing	1994	18.2
	1995	**17.4**

Textiles

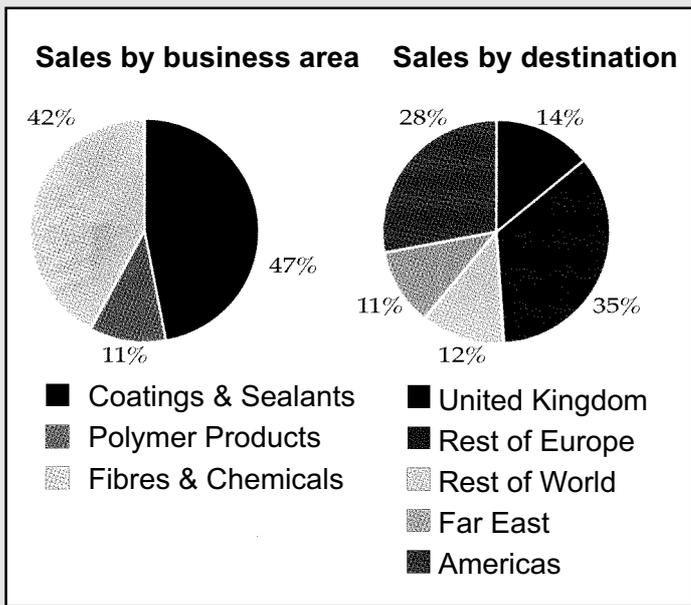|		
Fabrics	1994	23.0
	1995	**25.2**
Furnishings	1994	7.0
	1995	**2.2**
Spinning	1994	2.2
	1995	**–0.2**

Bar charts

Useful to show comparisons. The example here shows the profits made in 1994 and 1995 by Courtaulds textiles through selling textiles and clothing.

Line graphs

Useful to show changes over a period of time as in sales figures, or production costs. The example here shows the changes in turnover and trading profit over five years for Liberty – a company specialising in textile goods.

Pie charts

Useful to show the proportions of the parts making up the whole. The example here shows a comparison of sales figures for Courtaulds – a multinational company producing coatings and sealants, polymer products, fibres and chemicals.

Sales by business area   Sales by destination

- ■ Coatings & Sealants
- ▨ Polymer Products
- ▨ Fibres & Chemicals

- ■ United Kingdom
- ■ Rest of Europe
- ▨ Rest of World
- ▨ Far East
- ▨ Americas

Presenting colour

Justifying your choice of colours

Colour is important for textile items because it influences our choices, our moods and emotions. Designers understand this and use colour to enhance their products. Designers need to describe and define the colours needed in their design and justify their choice to the client. Using a colour wheel helps to define and describe basic colours or hues. By introducing the ideas of saturation (the strength or purity of the colour) and lightness (the brightness or brilliance of the colour), designers can build up a palette of colours from which to choose.

You can use these points in justifying your choice of colour for clothing:

▲ dark colours are slimming, pale colours are not;

▲ red and oranges are warm;

▲ yellow is cheery;

▲ green is relaxing;

▲ blue is cool.

The overall colours in an interior will affect our response or mood. We associate black with death, grey can make us sad, and red may make us restless after a while. Analogous colours create harmony and are relaxing. In the theatre, however, black is associated with evil, white with innocence, and bright colours are used to excite or attract attention.

Mood boards

You can show the effect of your colour choice by presenting a mood board. This is simply a collection of colours and shapes of paper, card and fabric that evoke an emotional response. It will help you decide on the right colours and convince others of your choice.

Itten's colour wheel
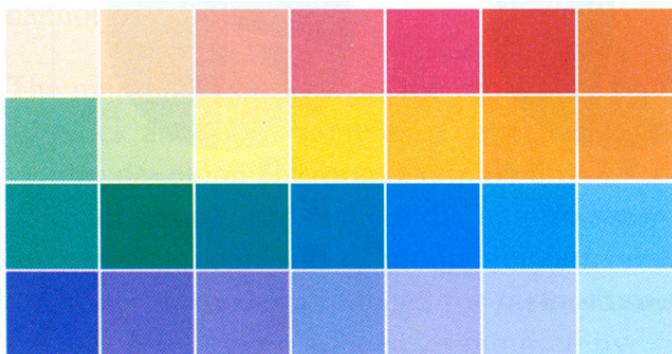
By varying saturation and lightness a wide range of colours can be obtained
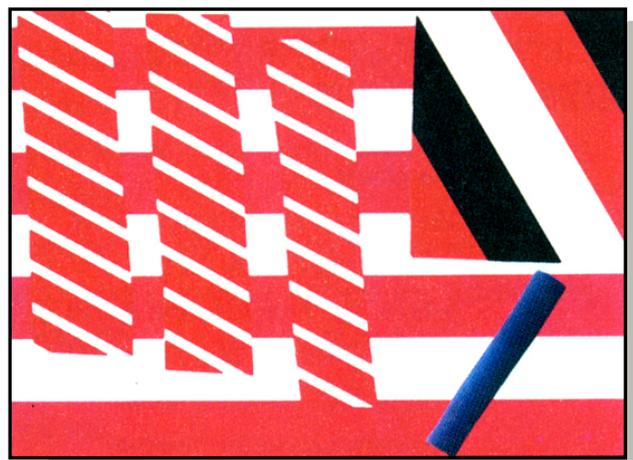
Energy and excitement, but for what sort of product?

Relating to the market

In presenting information to a client it is usually important to give an understanding of the market into which the product will be sold. It is here that a theme board can help show that the designs will appeal to the particular market or market sector. Theme boards are very useful for showing clients how a change in the image of a product will improve sales in new or existing markets. Two examples are shown here.

What sorts of products would relate to these theme boards?

Presenting interiors

Interiors reflect personality in a home and a corporate image in the worlds of business and industry.

Your presentation of an interior cannot possibly show all the detail but it must show all the features that are important in giving it appeal to those who will use it. Your illustration should convey the following points:

▲ size;

▲ shape;

▲ orientation;

▲ point of entry and exit;

▲ lighting, including natural lighting and shadow;

▲ the focal point of interest;

▲ other points of interest;

▲ the placing of furniture;

▲ the use of vertical and horizontal lines to create interest, and the illusion of space;

▲ overall colour scheme and associated textures;

▲ details of pattern, texture and colourways in particular furnishings.

You can use a combination of plan, elevation and perspective views to describe these features. Here is an example. You can use computer software to produce graphics like this. It takes time to learn how to do this but once you are familiar with the procedures you can produce attractive, accurate graphics very quickly.