

SEAGATE FREEAGENT

Challenge

Seagate asked frog to update the look of its external storage devices, hoping to reposition its brand within the broader field of consumer electronics. Each year, laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players have grown smaller, sleeker, more aesthetically pleasing. Yet somehow external hard drives had been left behind by this era of technological beautification. Painted plastic, harsh edges, and bulky shapes were still the rule of the day. frog recognized that an external hard drive had yet to be made for the aesthetes, consumers who care that their products be both beautiful and functional. A better-designed external hard drive would appeal to this new user group, while recasting Seagate as a premium brand, differentiating it from competitors.

The Value Within

Our team of industrial designers, strategists, and design analysts conducted broad market research and contextual user inquiries to further identify the values of the Seagate brand, beyond the aesthetic. Time and again – in our frogThink session with Seagate executives, in user surveys and interviews – one concept repeated itself, the cornerstone of a new design language: the personal significance of a hard drive's content. Like a pearl within an oyster shell, it is the data stored inside our hard drives that lends them value. The external design needed to emphasize this internal worth.

Introducing Style to Substance

frog's design language brings every element into harmony, including form, shape, material, finish, color, light, movement, and sound. Every sensory experience was taken into account. The hard drives were designed around the simplicity of natural shapes and colors, referencing the sloping geometry of curved wood. The lines of this form lend the devices a retro-modern feel, creating a sense of the human touch within a natural world. A gentle amber glow, set deep within a frame of espresso brown, reflects the life, the heart of the product. This light responds when a user refreshes the drive's content, glowing softly throughout the download to emphasize the living nature of stored information. This color choice also distances the drives from the realm of commoditization, moving from the traditional shine of painted silver and black into the warm colors of the home, of heritage.

In order to create a modern, high-quality storage product while maintaining sales across market segments, a tiering approach was introduced, under which each product would be available in both a luxury flagship model and a less costly edition.



ABOVE

The modern external design of the Seagate FreeAgent hard drive introduced style to the storage market.

The new line, called FreeAgent, comes in variety of sizes, ranging from a 1.8-inch portable to a 3.5-inch desktop model. Some of the devices utilize e-ink technology to include an editable external surface that can showcase a photo, caption, or other prized image, once more emphasizing the content of the user.

A Look Ahead

The FreeAgent design language we produced for Seagate will be utilized across all product groups, revolutionizing the company's offerings for years to come. But we took this project further than a simple surface redesign; we helped the company re-envision its brand. Pulling insights from our research, strategy, and design explorations, we constructed a comprehensive business plan for Seagate to grow their business and advance within the field, highlighting product and service proposals, potential brand extensions, and promising business partnerships.

Results

The FreeAgent line is a beautiful, emotive solution to the challenge of hard drive design, introducing aesthetics to the world of data protection. The hard drives were unveiled at CES 2007, where they won an Innovations Award. FreeAgent also received glowing reviews in BusinessWeek, Forbes, PC World, and the Wall Street Journal.