

HITACHI DATA SYSTEMS

Challenge

Hitachi Data Systems sought to meet customer needs for consistent branding and high usability within its product portfolio. To achieve this goal, the company approached frog with a project proposal: redesign Hitachi storage infrastructure, including the front bezels of its large-scale storage devices and corresponding management suite. Hitachi wanted a distinctive look that would set its products apart from others in the market. But beyond this, it wanted an identifiable, user-friendly design language that would be implemented across its diverse product portfolio.

Targeted Recommendations

frog undertook extensive research to identify the current assets of the Hitachi Data Systems brand. We conducted a thorough analysis of its core consumer and key markets, as well as in-depth evaluations of tiering structures, manufacturing processes, and engineering. We examined competitors, both with and without unified design identities, and prepared documentation on the impact of our proposed changes.

Softer Hitachi Hardware

Hitachi storage systems store vast quantities of information. They are the receptacles of patient information in hospitals, student applications in college admissions offices, customer contact data in international service organizations, and lie at the heart of many financial institutions and telecommunications companies. Both the bezels and the software needed to reflect this human focus, promising reliability and ease of navigation to the end-user.

From a hardware perspective, frog set about crafting a softer, sculpted exterior that would humanize the form, moving the devices away from their traditional metallic feel. Across all sizes and models, a visual ribbon of color was introduced representing the flow of data so central to these products. To give the users the freedom to tailor their purchases to expanding needs, frog's designers created a newly-stackable shape, working closely with industrial designers and Hitachi Data Systems engineers to ensure the design met all engineering requirements for proper airflow and device status. The relationship between bezel and frame was reexamined and redesigned to grant users increased access to the machine itself, and all on-screen information and LED technology was rearranged to offer the greatest legibility to end-users.

Revitalized Software Solutions

In order to help users more effectively navigate the Hitachi storage system, frog redesigned its corresponding software suite, as well. The Hitachi Storage Management Suite is



ABOVE

Redesigned external casing and internal software humanize the Hitachi Data Systems brand and product.

the centralized point of control for all of the company's enterprise storage systems, a platform allowing users to manage, monitor, and maintain their devices. frog performed a heuristic evaluation of the existing software suite, recommending improvements to the design language and navigation. The new applications take a top-down approach to navigation, ushering users intuitively through key storage management processes. In order to simplify procedures and remove unnecessary steps, frog recommended default settings for those options that are used regularly, with additional refinements available through advanced settings. With these changes, a standard practice would require far fewer steps from the average user – streamlining the storage management process. A clear navigation bar was introduced in place of the existing drop-down menu, helping users to move more quickly throughout the suite.

Result

The strength of the new designs has catapulted HDS to the top of its market, with a 50% revenue increase since the frog partnership began. Internally, the project has fostered even greater collaboration between Hitachi teams. Externally, it has garnered attention from industry analysts and award judges alike. The Enterprise Strategy Group's Lab Validation report of the new server system, said: "Two years ago, ESG would have said that Hitachi Data Systems provided a mediocre set of storage management solutions. Today, we emphatically say that the HiCommand storage management suite is best-in-class." The software also won Japan's sole design commendation, the 2006 Good Design Award.