CATHARINA DAUM

Interview: What really matters in machine design

Who decides what TRUMPF products should look like? In most cases this task falls to the head of the design management team, Dina Gallo. In this interview, she explains why her job is never routine, recalls which machine posed the biggest challenge, and reveals her favorite product.

What is a typical day for a machine designer, Ms. Gallo?

Every single day is different. That's what I love about my job! We support a wide range of projects and get input from numerous different parts of the company. I spend much of my time talking to colleagues to share ideas and get feedback, so you might say that the only aspect of my work that happens on a routine basis is communication!

Do you get involved in the development of new machines right from the start?

Yes. In most cases, I join groups that are set up to create new products right from the beginning, when they are still bouncing around ideas. It's good to start thinking about the design early on.

Which recent product would you say was your favorite?

I took a real shine to the Track&Trace markers, the saucer-sized transmitters that help customers keep track of parts on the factory floor. It was the first time we had faced this kind of assignment. And because this was a completely new product in the TRUMPF portfolio, we were able to forge new paths in the design process.

Dina Gallo had free rein when it came to designing the Track&Trace marker. The round design was the shape she ultimately found most appealing.
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They certainly look good! In fact, you even won the Red Dot Design Award 2019 for your efforts.

Yes, I was absolutely delighted. The Red Dot Jury singled us out for the Best of the Best distinction.

And that's not the first time you have won a prize for your designs. Juries are clearly impressed by your work. What is it that makes TRUMPF machines stand out?

That's a good question! I would say we take a very consistent approach to our designs, thinking carefully about the details and how we can perfect each and every product. The TRUMPF style of design is high-quality, well-conceived and understated. A classic combination!

You joined TRUMPF seven years ago. How did you learn about the machines? Did you actually do some punching, bending and laser machining yourself?

No, but I got a lot of training in all the products. And, of course, I have always had the good fortune to be surrounded by so many highly skilled colleagues who I can turn to at any time. That was particularly important early on, because however exciting the products are, they can be very challenging in design terms.

How important is machine design in the general scheme of things? Isn't it more important how they work rather than how they look?

TRUMPF has a long tradition of focusing on design. The company has always believed that its machines should not just feature state-of-the-art technology, but also attractive designs. What was missing was a design concept that spanned all the company's technologies. That's what I brought in. The appearance of the product emphasizes its solidity, and this sense of robustness is visually enhanced by the nicely balanced surface ratios of the sheet metal elements. We don't always need to have squared edges, as demonstrated by the Track&Trace marker. What matters is getting the details exactly right. Of course, we're always working on making the TRUMPF product design even better. Despite having clear and consistent rules, our design language is very versatile, so I would say we're well equipped to meet future challenges.

What feedback have you received from customers?

Many of them set great store by how their products look. They like their machines to not only work perfectly, but also to have a high-quality appearance. We often hear that kind of feedback.

Digitalization is a major topic at TRUMPF and throughout the industry. Does it influence your work?

Absolutely. Nowadays we're not just designing hardware, but also software. We're working on app design and identifying what users want from their touchscreen displays. When it comes to design, it's important to follow the same approach for digital components as we do for machines and tools. That's part of my job as a designer.

What's the toughest project you have been confronted with?

The TruLaser Center 7030 project was particularly challenging. It's a very large machine with lots of surfaces and complex features. I was involved in the development process right from the start. There were numerous changes over the course of the project so we had to adapt our design accordingly. I can't tell you how good it felt to finally see and touch the result of so many years of work!

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