

DEVELOPING A DURABLE DESIGN

TEXT: GÖRAN SMITH

While I was trying to barbecue a biscuit on a stick over a wet camp fire in the troublesome gap of the Blue Ridge Mountains and enjoying the company of rigid lumberjacks and story-telling Vietnam veterans, I realized that during my summer as an intern at Montie Design I have been given unique opportunities, gained invaluable experience and created lifelong memories.

Montie Design is a small collaborative product design and development firm with core competence in industrial design, mechanical engineering and product commercialization. Since the founding in 2006, Montie Design has developed products in diverse market spaces such as industrial, commercial and military. The office is situated in technology-rich Research Triangle region of North Carolina which generates access to an active engineering community and cutting-edge trends in mechanical and industrial engineering. In excess to the consultancy business, Montie Design has its own line of products including in particular shooting and outdoor equipment but also furniture and apparel. At the moment Montie Design's furniture collection only consists of a single coffee table. The company wants to extend their furniture line and get in to the office furniture market. Therefore my main project during this summer was to develop a Montie Design conference table together with industrial designer Yi-Mu Chang.

Our project started off with a research part where we reviewed the existing market, mapped the use situation and identified the needs and demands of potential users. During our research we tried to adopt a holistic approach, why we spoke to representatives for every involved participant in the furniture industry. We gained tremendous amounts of information throughout our study and summarized it all in a white paper in which we also recommended a sales strategy for Montie Design.

Our first conclusion was that the market in general was already saturated and that it would be very hard to compete with the big, multinational office furniture vendors since they are able to offer extremely competitive prices due to outsourcing and the size of their production. For price is often the most important aspect for companies purchasing office supplies. But we did find a gap in the existing market. There are customers who are willing to spend money and who are looking for American made, durable tableware which stands out from "normal" office furniture. Their needs are unfulfilled. In addition, North Carolina has traditionally been known as "the furniture capital of the world". Hence, our conclusion was that Montie Design should aim for a high-range, customizable and modular conference table with an expression of genuine North Carolina furniture. Due to the importance of not blending in with existing furniture lines, a watchword for the design was "better too much than too little". Because of present vendor rela-



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tions and the expressions of existing Montie Design products our table was to be manufactured with water jet cutting as the manufacturing method. Water jet cutting is an interesting technique which enables you to cut almost anything without interfering with the material's inherent structure or changing intrinsic properties. The method is also limiting though, since the operation is best suited for two-dimensional shapes.

After weeks of hard work during which we tested thousands of design ideas and developed over hundred different tables, we settled for a final concept. We are at the moment adding tolerances and preparing the drawings for manufacturing. Hopefully in about a week, any person who dares to peek in to Montie Designs conference room will be stunned by looking at the first copy of Montie Designs brand new product.

During my internship I've also been involved in three client initiated projects covering the areas of baby carriage, personal alarm equipment and competitive shooting gear. In those projects I have contributed by participating in brainstorm sessions, following up emerged ideas, drawing presentation sketches and field testing prototypes. Furthermore I've had the chance to join customer meetings, visiting manufacturing sites and negotiating with vendors.

This internship has given me an excellent opportunity to learn the business of industrial design firms. My boss has been very kind and buoyantly answered all my questions regarding first



Up, left: Resting by the campfire in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Up, right: Field testing a bendable bracket system. Down, left: Looking for waves at Carolina beach. Down, right: Ideation sketching at the Montie Design office.

customer, advertisement, business profiling etc. I've also met quite a few entrepreneurs with businesses in various commerce sections during my stay. They have all been very inspiring! In the projects I have worked close together with proficient mechanical engineers and the most brilliant industrial designer I've ever met. To sum up, I would like to note that I gained a lot of priceless experience during my internship and at the same time, I had a lot of fun.

Alongside the work, a lot of my time in Raleigh has been used for playing soccer with Molson Safelite who plays in the premier division of the triangle adult soccer league. It didn't take long before I realized that the Swedish referees are far more accepting compared to their American equivalents. The weekends were more often than not spent at beautiful spots around the east coast such as Virginia Beach, Blue Ridge Mountains and Wilmington. Before I leave the country I will also spend three weeks in California and visit a few "must see locations" such as Grand Canyon, Yosemite and Lake Tahoe.

I would like to end this travelogue by sending out a big thank you to my boss, Montie Roland for believing in me, all supporting companies for making this trip possible (especially Forex) and all the members of USA Summer Internship Program for their hard work and for their good spirit.

Thank you!

GÖRAN SMITH

Born: December 17th, 1988 in Lund

Present Education: B.Sc. in Industrial Design Engineering

Worst memory: Wendy's square burger

Best memory: Camping in the mountains with conservative but friendly old-timers

Future plans: A semester of studies at Queen's University of Belfast

US nostalgia: The combination of pick-up trucks, southern accents and the confederate flag

Swedish nostalgia: Lund

MONTIE DESIGN

Funded: 2006

Situated: Morrisville, NC

Employees: 7

Business area: Product Development

Hosting interns since: 2011

Homepage: www.montie.com



Montie Design