

SPELSBERG / AK III SMALL-SCALE DISTRIBUTOR



PROJECT-EXPOSÉ

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PRODUCT DESIGN FOR THE SPELSBERG AK III:

The company Spelsberg produces electrical installation products that are characterised by their extremely high ruggedness and durability. Spelsberg is committed to tested safety based on a quality brand strategy and all of its products carry the iQ logo for industrial quality. Highest priority is attached to approved products which are carefully constructed from the 100 million or more moulded parts the company produces each year. Consequently, all products have one thing in common: strength and safety!

This project started somewhat atypically with an unexpected call from the project manager. Years ago, I had a brief conversation with the sales manager from Spelsberg at a booth and we exchanged business cards. It would appear that things simply do not get lost at Spelsberg and, some years later the project manager was on the phone. This impressed me right from the start.

The project manager informed me that Spelsberg had been focussing on the development of a major technical project for a considerable length of time. Now, the board was concerned about the shape of the product, which "needed a lot of getting used to". A lot of project time had, however, already expired with the result that tooling had to commence no later than in 2 months. Speed was therefore of the essence and we quickly arranged a meeting at the company. I introduced myself to the Managing Director and an extensive team comprising members of various departments and we then quickly moved on to the project. Due to a large number of essential parameters, the product inevitably had a very jagged shape.

The task of transforming this object into an aesthetic marketable product in such a short time was by no means easy. An initial design phase and an adaptation period to accommodate the technical necessities could provide a sound basis for the company's highly competent development department. I calculated the job and submitted my offer. On acceptance of the offer, the project promptly commenced with a second technical meeting. I noticed that the specification sheet for the project included one parameter which apparently excluded the use of internal slides for tooling. Hence, the development engineers had no other option than to externally mould the technically important structures to the sides of the distribution box. This inevitably led to a very jagged shape. This parameter in the specs did, however, strike me as being quite "debatable". I therefore selected several variations and gradually implemented a number of adaptations which eventually paved the way for new solutions. After many phone calls, I carefully worked my way through the preliminary CAD design and implemented the important dimensions. My work culminated in 3 different basic designs with two derived variants.

Off to the presentation!

Even more people were now gathered in the large conference room. I presented the various proposals and then the inevitable came to pass: everyone could, of course, see the advantage of the inner slides, but there was a definite reluctance to move away from the original interpretation of the parameters in the specification sheet. But the team was fully committed to working objectively and debating the different variants. The objective was understood, the options lay on the table: agreement had to be reached.

I left the meeting with a good feeling. The anticipated call came a few days later: a decision had been made. The most ambitious design, which departed the most from the original shape and was characterised by a striking front design, came up trumps.

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Now there was no more time to lose as this design would prove to be a real challenge for the development team in view of the tight time frame. We immediately fixed dates for interim and construction meetings.

One of the most experienced engineers mastered the CAD system with all its subtleties. When he had understood the approach and the proposed constructional details of the design, we were able to proceed with tremendous speed. Our approach was meticulous: on the big CAD-screen we immersed ourselves in the screw channels, cut profiles in various angles and calculated the resulting strengths. We adapted the design of the components to the pivot motions and joining directions. With my own CAD system, I rechecked the amendments and verified them in terms of their compatibility with the chosen design. After two interim presentations of the steps, the details and some possible alternatives, Spelsberg made an internal decision which confirmed the design with the latest changes. Two months to the day after receiving the order, the task was solved and I could rely on the motivated and highly experienced development team at Spelsberg.

Shortly before its launch at a trade show, news emerged that the product had been honoured with the iF Design Award 2015:

The managing partner of the company, Mr. Holger Spelsberg wrote:

>>> Hello everybody,

today I am speaking to all of you and even to those who are still working vehemently on "our new AK".

Today, Mr. Wagner was informed that we are among the winners of the "iF Design Award" in 2015 with our AK III. This design prize, which has been awarded since 1954, is a prestigious award that is awarded in the disciplines Product, Communication, Packaging, Interior Architecture and Professional Concept. 53 jurors met a few days ago in Hamburg and selected the winners from almost 5,000 products that were submitted from more than 60 countries.

At this point I would like to give a special mention to the colleagues on the development team, together with Mr. Pieter Kuschel, SYNTHESIS DESIGNPARTNER, but at the end of the day it was the performance of the whole team that got this product off the ground - congratulations on winning the Design Award!

Greetings

Holger Spelsberg <<<

CAN A DESIGN PROJECT GO ANY BETTER THAN THIS?

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The draft of the AK III
in front view perspective
next to the final product



The structure of
the design



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