

Furniture supplier Gordon Russell asked London-based consultancy Asa Designers to design a range of senior executive furniture, to be known as Axis. Asa also acted as consultants on Axis, which grew out of an earlier project called Thesis. Axis was launched in October.

The brief

We planned a complete programme of senior executive furniture that would both reflect the changed shape of office environments in respect of technological and storage demands and also consider the use of new and varied materials and finishes. The range had to convey the image and status of the user, yet be capable of expressing a design statement.

Our product development process operates within time and budget objectives and demands a close working relationship with our design and development department, where the original concepts and models can be translated into prototypes.

Reference must be made to existing manufacturing resources, production methods and available tooling, although in the case of Axis, external suppliers were contacted for the metal components, as they provided a more effective resource.

While we respect the material specifications issued by Asa, we may encounter problems in the costing process that demand adjustments. We pay close attention to BS standards and in particular to surface finishes and, in addition for Axis, cable management, addressing BS 6250 and BS 6396.

The project requires consultation with customers to provide feedback on the design, looking at features, specification and aesthetics.

Right: the Axis range, designed to 'convey the image and status of the executive user'

The result





The verdict

'Gordon Russell had a long-term view of design and were prepared to support a continual programme of new product development internally as well as externally. The commitment to design was at the highest level but eagerly supported at all levels within the company.

'The trust placed in us and the respect for our input was flattering and inspiring, generating a loyalty from the whole studio to Gordon Russell's success.

'On a project by project basis, the attitude of the internal team was again a revelation. Bringing an idea to a conclusion was a team effort and the positive approach to solving problems thrown up rather than looking for scapegoats meant we became very close.

'Probably the two most important factors have been that final decisions were taken by the chief executive via a small 'design committee' and backed fully with resource; and second, they were implemented internally by a member of the design committee, these two key figures being in close communication. The trust between people was tremendous.

'The relationship we built up with the group is pathetically rare in British industry. It requires visionary management and continual commitment. The contract furniture industry in the UK, like most industries has blown the opportunities presented in the seventies and early eighties and will fizzle into insignificance throughout the nineties - all familiar stuff!'



Top: steel parts deliver strength and durability. Above: cables are fed through the legs of the desk