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May 2012

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Towards pipeline design

by *Marco Capellini, architect*

The "social" issue is a development strategy of growing importance for new industrial products and services. Global multinational companies have started to address the issue with different approaches that start from the company, the manufacturing system, or the end product to give a new identity and a new market value to the product. Such value is, in most cases, "intangible", but of great interest for end users.

The product pipeline, meant as the group of entities through which product components take shape (materials, finishes, components, and others), is now more transparent for the history of the end product.

Companies are starting to realize that suppliers can/must act as strategic partners for new product development, rather than be simply identified with a "code".

Suppliers are now a proactive and visible part of a "story to be told" to consumers about the origin of a product and how it is transported, assembled, and packaged.

This story (necessarily with a happy end), in steps, is characterized by materials, technologies, people, places, and journeys.



This should be identified in the product through appropriate consumer communication in order to make it clear (by way of market strategy) that the end product has an added value, and consumers themselves can be the final chapter of the story.

Doing so, and doing it in the best possible way, requires utmost honesty and transparency. In this respect, design can and should be an active player through pipeline traceability for all socio-environmental issues. The new challenge for design is to tell stories other than the past or the formal ones. New design should tell socio-environmental product stories.

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