



Selection Interview with Klaus P. Hajok

- 1. Klaus P. Hajok, you are the owner and managing director of the HAJOK Design agency in Hamburg, Germany. Could you briefly tell us something about how the agency started and how it has developed?**

After completing my design degree, I gained my first experience in corporate design followed by packaging design and quickly decided to start my own business. What began as a "one-man band" 20 years ago slowly gained momentum. My fellow students were my first co-workers and I continued to develop the "small design studio". Since those early days, we have developed into a design agency and brand consulting company with nearly 50 employees and have established ourselves as a major player in the industry. Really sounds quite simple..

- 2. What range of services does HAJOK Design offer its clients?**

We see ourselves as brand consultants and make full use of the possibilities of strategy and packaging design. Design has always been the heart of HAJOK Design, but it has become increasingly important to provide more comprehensive consulting services to our clients. This is why we currently have 12 consultants managing projects and processes, alongside our strategic staff who develop visions for brands and products. This often begins with a workshop, where key topics are identified and later come to life in the design work. And thanks to our in-house artwork department, there are no nasty surprises in the subsequent production work.

- 3. How does your agency differ from the competition? What do you think makes HAJOK Design stand out?**

The combination of an owner-managed design agency and a brand consultancy is a rare find in the market today. Because of our size, we can do more in less time than many of our competitors. We have a flexible infrastructure made up of specialists who work extremely well together in agile teams, which are both creative and effective. This way, we successfully support both global players as well as local champions" – with product ranges spanning from just two products right up to international brand portfolios with over 2,000 items.

- 4. Over the years, you and your team have worked on numerous projects for a wide variety of clients. Are there any projects of which you are particularly proud?**

It might sound like a cliché, but we really always work with the intention of being proud of the results. This motivates us immensely – sometimes the challenge is an extraordinary design, sometimes we have a tough nut to crack in terms of content and tight deadlines. As a design agency with international clients, we are, of course, up against fierce competition. When we win projects competing against top-level international agencies, this makes us feel particularly proud of what we do.

5. Are there certain trends and developments that you are currently experiencing in the field of packaging design? If so, what are they and how do you rate them personally?

It's all about quality, time-schedules and budgets. Clients' demands for strategy and design quality are constantly rising. Packaging design and brand communication are increasingly converging and the question of a brand's positioning and core values is becoming more and more important to consumers. The packaging has to deliver more and we have to, too.

6. Please complete the following sentence: A company should hire HAJOK Design if...

...it is looking for a top agency for brand consulting and packaging design. We are experienced, passionate designers and creative strategists. We cover the entire process chain from the idea to operational implementation. Personal, dependable and owner-managed, with the experience of 20 years successfully providing our clients with consulting and design excellence.

7. Are there any particular brands you would love to work for? If so, for which and why?

Of course, there are some brands! Basically, it is always exciting for us to develop brands, to enhance them and to tell their stories. It's about making brands strong, because today the consumer only distinguishes between strong and weak brands, regardless of whether this concerns branded or private label products.

8. Please tell us about three websites or apps that you regularly use or visit.

Although I really appreciate printed material, digital media does play a central role. I find inspiring things for example at thedieline.com, thebrander.com or on Pinterest.

9. How do you perceive and rate the German design industry? (Feel free to make an international comparison).

The German design industry and its results are a lot better than many think. One tends to compare everyday FMCG products with designs for exotic niche products from abroad. However, when you compare like with like, you arrive a different conclusion, even though there is still plenty of room for improvement, of course.

10. How and where do you see the agency in the next few years? What are your goals?

This much I can say: in the next few years, we will be working very hard on ourselves! We are considering ways to extend our services, where quality clearly comes before quantity.

11. Finally one last question: HAJOK Design is based in Hamburg. What do you appreciate both professionally and privately about this city?

Hamburg is a great location for us. Here we can find the right kind of talented co-workers and good infrastructure for our work. Whether specialised freelancers or other providers, we have everything here on our doorstep. As someone originally from the South of Germany, I can say that I appreciate Hamburg when I'm not working, too. Here my family and I have a great life with lots of opportunities for leisure activities and there are many possibilities here to enable you to develop your full potential.