



“I would absolutely recommend MetaDesign. They have the right team and right skills to ensure that design processes and procedures are supporting the business strategy.”

Rich Gioscia

Director of Design, Palm Inc.

In 2002, Palm Inc. made the strategic move to split into two companies: PalmSource, which focuses on the development and licensing of the Palm Operating System, and Palm, responsible for continuing the heritage of developing simple-to-use handheld Personal Digital Assistants. Palm faces an increasingly competitive marketplace with companies such as Sony and Handspring creating their own branded interfaces to provide access to additional features and to extend their own brands in the PDA market.

In response, Palm commissioned MetaDesign to design the interface icons for their new range of products. The goals were to: (1) provide visual differentiation for Palm by making the new Palm products look progressive. This objective was critical, given that recent research indicated that the Palm brand was becoming associated with outdated technology; (2) develop the system so that it would work in black and white, grayscale and color, and at large and small sizes; and (3) optimize the designs for easy recognition and usability.

MetaDesign conducted qualitative research to ascertain perceptions of the interface metaphors previously used. Three design directions were then created and tested before deciding the final set of icons.

The complete system comprises 288 icons: 24 different application icons in 12 formats (high- and low-resolution, color, black and white, and grayscale, both in icon and ‘list view’ sizes). MetaDesign also designed the icons that are silk-screened on the body of the products, and worked with the industrial design team at Palm to create improved typography for the product keyboards.

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High-resolution

Icon view



List view



Low-resolution

Icon view



List view



Icon design

New icon designs indicating product functionality are applied directly to the buttons and writing areas of Palm devices. On-screen application icons were developed to work in both 1-bit (black and white) and full-color environments with high- and low-resolution versions of each.

Design process

Various concepts for the new icon design were developed for Palm's consideration. The most promising concepts were then tested with potential users to determine which forms best communicated the appropriate functions and met customer perceptions of the Palm brand.

