

A Call for Fashion

I'M A DESIGN GUY WHO "gets" business. But design innovation can't happen without business leaders who get what I do. That takes time. I remember standing in front of a bunch of suits in Salo, Finland, in the early 1990s, saying that the cell phone is fashion technology and a personal accessory. They looked at me like, Where did they find this guy? The world still considered the mobile phone strictly a business tool.

My mission was to change this little black blob with mini buttons into a colorful object of desire. I started comparing the mobile phone to a Ferrari. I presented the first study of color and materials in association with the individual. I brought in paint chips. We looked at different social categories—successful idealist, for instance—to show why you'd create a different color composition for different people. Nobody at Nokia had ever seen such a thing. People sparked up and said, "Hey, that's neat."

Before long, we were the first to introduce user-changeable covers; the first to have elliptical-shaped, soft and friendly forms; the first with big screens. We introduced new categories to expand on the appeal of products for different people, such as the first luxury phone. This is about what people want today and leading them to what they will want tomorrow.

In the early 1990s, Nokia controlled about 12% of the global market for cell phones. Today, Nokia is the world leader in handsets, with 38% of the market.

Frank Nuovo

Chief designer and vice president
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LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

