

A 3D Systems Success Story

The Alessi Company
3-D Modeling



Alessi Speeds Up Model-Making and Saves 70% of Cost

Customer: The Alessi Company (Crusinallo, Italy), one of Italy's famous "Factories of Italian Design," is renowned for high-end home products crafted in mirror-polish stainless steel and a wide range of other materials. Founded in the 1920s, the company employs about 500 people, who are directly involved in project development, production, sales and distribution. Alessi is exporting 65% of its turnover to more than 60 countries and count over 5000 points of sale.

Advancing Italian Design with Rapid Prototyping



In the early 1990s, Alessi's designers switched from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional design process using plastic prototypes to obtain a more realistic view of the complex parts that make up its innovative designs. As the demand for Alessi's products continued to grow, so did the designers' need for a

faster, more reliable way to create plastic prototypes.

"At the end of 2004, we began to explore the various options for an in-house rapid prototyping system," says Cristiano Colosio, CAD Manager at Alessi (Crusinallo, Italy). "We evaluated systems such as Object Eden, Prodigy Plus, Dimension, and Zprinter 310 Plus, but what impressed us with the 3D Systems' InVision® SR 3-D Modeler was the high quality of the prototype's form and the ease of cleaning the parts compared to the competing systems."

High Quality Models for Mechanical Tests and Assembly Work

Alessi looked for a system that was cost-effective — both in terms of the initial investment and on-going maintenance. Alessi also required a solution that was simple to operate, automatic, non-restrictive, and compatible with its existing office environment. The InVision® 3-D Modeler also met the company's stringent quality requirements for models, surface finish, and, most importantly, producing the minute details that make the Alessi designs renowned by consumers around the world.

In the first nine months after the installation of the InVision®



Cupola coffeemaker prototype: ensuring the correct 'lip' is essential.

Modeler, Alessi created more than 600 prototypes of all sizes, ranging from small model teaspoons to large 150mm teapots. To date, the InVision® 3-D Modeler has logged approximately 3,000 hours of operation, or an average of 15-16 hours per day.

"The InVision® SR 3-D Modeler fully met our expectations immediately," says Mauro Casalino, Models/Prototype Manager at Alessi. "The VisiJet® SR Material we use in the printing is very robust, and prototypes have long life spans."

Re-Engineering the "Cupola"

In early 2005, Alessi decided to completely re-engineer the technical design of one of its top products – the Cupola coffeemaker – a favorite of Alessi customers for 15 years. The goal was to optimize the product to meet current demands in the changing coffeemaker market.

Six different prototypes were made using the InVision® SR 3-D Modeler during the company's various design phases. Many

Continued on next page

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InVision® samples were also used for functional tests of the Cupola's five-component assembly, the heating element and body, the assembly of standard metal parts inside the collector. The models printed on the InVision® 3-D Modeler were also critical to perhaps the most important test of all: pouring.

"It was very interesting to come to understand the lip that poured the coffee the best," Colosio says. "During the tests, we varied some parameters, and in few hours we had a new sample that reflected the latest changes. All that remained was to make a prototype in metal."

"The new 'la cupola' model had to be in line with the design classic on the market for so many years," Colosio adds. "The ability to place the prototype side-by-side with the older model and compare the different versions made our job a lot easier. Visual control is extremely important."

"The total time savings, representing about 5-6 weeks per product, allows us to speed up all our processes and increase efficiency, not to mention the financial savings: it now costs us 70 percent less to make a prototype than it did before we had the InVision® Printer in-house."

- Mauro Casalino, Models/Prototype Manager of The Alessi Company

Lowering Prototype Costs by 70%

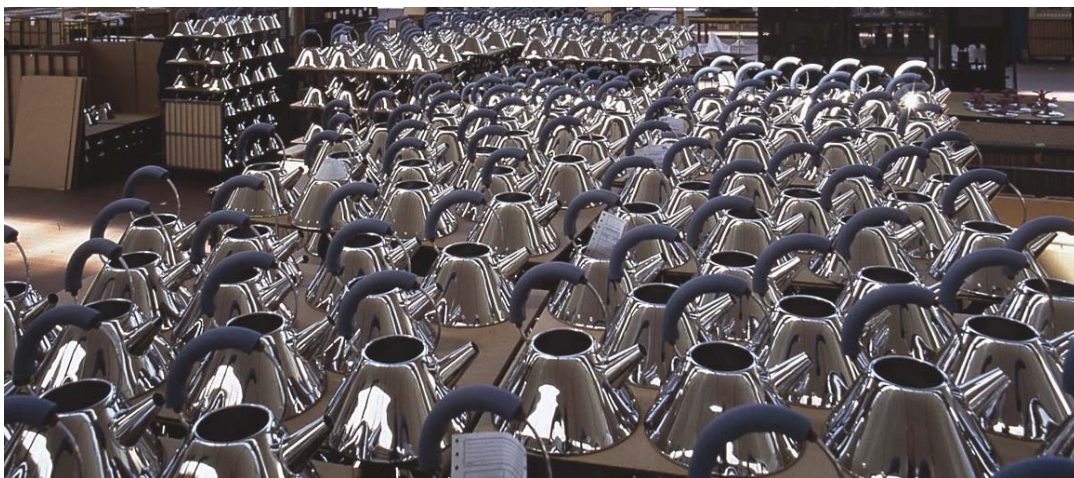
Alessi's designers and model-makers have a wide-range of improvements by using the InVision® SR 3-D Modeler, including higher productivity and a significant improvement in communications between the two groups throughout the world.

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percent less to make a prototype than it did before we had the InVision® Printer in-house," Casalino says.

"Now, we cannot live without InVision®, because of the freedom it has given us," Colosio concludes.

To read more about The Alessi Company, visit www.alessi.com.



Alessi's local production site in Crusinallo, Italy: Volume production of high-quality design goods.



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