



## STAFF PROFILE - PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### Product Designer Gord Rose

The greatest test of a person's passion for their work is surely whether they'd still do it if they weren't paid. MEC product designer Gord Rose is one of the lucky ones. When asked, he thinks for a second, and then says yeah - he'd still want to do his job even if he were doing it for free.



An industrial designer by trade, product designer Gord Rose has been designing outdoor gear for 13 years. It's still somewhat new to have industrial designers in the outdoor gear field. But as gear continues to get more high-tech, industrial designers like Gord are able to apply manufacturing technologies from other industries - like injection molding and thermal molding - to gear for outdoor play.

A long-time outdoors nut, Gord's playtime has included canoeing, sea kayaking, backcountry skiing and bike touring. Vocation meets avocation in his career history, which includes designing for Necky Kayaks and for Coast Mountain Sports.

Gord says the whole product design process is quite unusual here.

"MEC is a bit different; we don't create the need and demand through advertising - we wait for the need to develop. And then ... ideation! Brainstorming and formation of ideas. And we narrow it down to the best design solution. As a designer, it's great here. No corners are ever cut for fabrics, materials or construction."

Even with suppliers and manufacturers that holds true. "We pay a premium to get the best stuff. We think the company that coats high-end tent floors for us are the best coaters in the business. So we're willing to pay for that quality, and we know that one part of the premium is for the company's eco-friendly solvent-recovery program."

Like most designers, Gord spends a lot of time researching technologies. He goes to outdoors industry shows, but also other industrial shows - from industrial fabrics to footwear or cars - where innovative design tends to push the edge of technology.

He also works with companies who do research and development. Right now, he wants a unique adhesive for a backpack. It's an adhesive which doesn't yet exist. He approaches a supplier, in this case a supplier of adhesives, with the problem he's encountering, and how he needs the new product to perform. He'll send them over a sample of the foam and fabrics

which he is working with. If the R & D division thinks his idea could be marketable, they will try to develop a solution.

Currently, Gord is cutting an 'extrusion die' - a prototype of the stiff metal rods used as structural support in backpacks. In one version, they weren't flexible enough to custom-bend to fit people. Then they were too flexible - some people found that if they pulled forward on the top straps hard enough when the packs were loaded, the extrusions would bend. So, Gord is currently working on developing a design and an aluminum alloy combination with the right flexibility. Once he gets samples of the new rods, he will put them in packs, and test them out for strength and flexibility. He may take them up to store staff who fit backpacks, and lend the prototype packs out to guides for field-testing.

The best part of the job? "Getting to make new stuff." Gord, who we pay to do what he loves most, is currently designing a new line of Serratus alpine packs.

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